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THE NEWSPAPER FOR ASHFORD, TENTERDEN AND SURROUNDING VILLAGES



Issue No 68

Available from Tuesday,  
December 23, 2008

We would like to wish all our readers and advertisers a  
**MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR**

# FEARS OVER CUTS TO FAST SERVICES

## WHAT'S ON & WATCH

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**FESTIVE FUN:** The big movies playing this holiday. Search 'preview'.

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Picture: ED HILL

■ BY ED HILL

MUCH heralded high-speed rail services coming to the town next year will also bring with it a cut in the number of regular, off-peak, 'fast services' it has been revealed.

And that has prompted some travellers to suggest it is a deliberate move to force people into paying up to 35 per cent more for the new bullet train services.

The high-speed trains begin next December, slashing travel times to London's St Pancras to just 37 minutes.

But the trade-off appears to be a reduction in the number of off-peak fast services to existing London terminals such as Charing Cross and Cannon Street. The journey time for those is around 63 minutes. The stopping service takes around 84 minutes.

It comes as rail firm Southeastern unveils its anticipated timetable for December 2009. It admits there are cuts to services – but says the high-speed route will revolutionise train travel from the town.

Rail user Peter Morgan from Heathfield Road, however, was left fuming after he had read the new-look schedule.

He contacted Yourashford to explain: "There are quite significant plans to cut off-peak rail services from Ashford International."

"Although there will be a very slight increase in rush-hour trains, the most significant and worrying off-peak loss will be that of the current fast service each half hour to Charing Cross, which will call at Tonbridge and Waterloo."

"The only remaining service to Charing Cross will be a slow 'all stations' service every half hour. There will be fewer connections for

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## LOOK WHO'S ON HIS WAY...

Yourashford would like to extend the warmest greetings of the season to all its readers and advertisers.

And we wish you all a very happy new year. We are not publishing a paper next week, but will return as normal on January 7. You can keep up with all the local news on our website [www.yourashford.co.uk](http://www.yourashford.co.uk).

Meanwhile, the town's biggest Santa – at Wyevale Garden Centre – will be keen to turn to page 8, for an exclusive interview with the man himself.

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**1** KOS Media staff on what Christmas means to them. See [www.yourkenttv.co.uk](http://www.yourkenttv.co.uk) and search the leisure channel.



**2** Take a tour of Kent's own version of Lapland. See web TV site [www.yourkenttv.co.uk](http://www.yourkenttv.co.uk) and search 'Lapland'.



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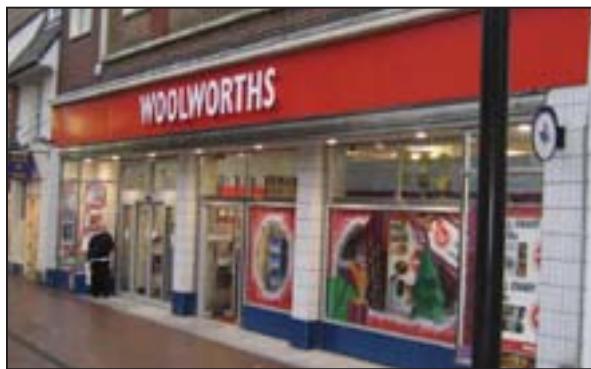
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**TIME'S RUNNING OUT:** The Ashford branch will shut soon after Tenterden's closes on Saturday

# Dates set for the end of our Woolies stores

■ BY NICK AMES

TENTERDEN'S branch of Woolworths will close its doors for the final time on Saturday – bringing to an end half a century of trading in the town.

However, the Ashford town centre branch looks likely to see in the new year – but close soon after.

The Tenterden store was among the first of a batch of 200 shops nationwide to be shut down by administrators Deloitte as they look to wrap-up the business after failing to find a buyer to keep it alive. Across Kent, branches in Canterbury, Margate, Ramsgate and Maidstone are set to close as well this month.

Other stores will close on December 30, January 2 and the last ones on January 5.

However the locations have not yet been finalised so the future of the store in Ashford is still unclear.

A number of businesses are believed to be bidding to secure the leases of the various stores – with the likes of Tesco and Poundland in the running. Companies which take over the leases are to be provided with details of Woolworths staff in the hope they will employ many of them.

Across the county there are 35 Woolworths stores employing a total of 1,167 people who all now face the prospect of losing their jobs.

The Tenterden store has been a fixture of the town since it opened around 50 years ago and it employs around 20 people.

A clearance sale – running for the last two weeks – will continue as Deloitte look to secure as much money from the stores as possible while they still trade in order to pay off creditors and settle redundancy payments.

Prices have plunged by up to 50 per cent and that will now rise to 60 per cent.

The administrators added that over 300 of the stores nationwide are under offer from a range of third parties, and there is considerable interest in the other 500 stores. The administrators have also received interest in and offers for the Woolworths brand name, and the associated Ladybird and Chad Valley brands.

Neville Kahn, joint administrator at Deloitte, said: "Whilst negotiations for the sale of Woolworths' retail arm remain ongoing, and we continue to speak to new interested parties, regrettably we have had to begin a store closure programme. We are extremely grateful to the staff and management for their support throughout this difficult time."

## Train timetable a 'balancing act' for services

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE  
passengers from Ashford at Tonbridge for Gatwick airport or Tunbridge Wells.

"At the same time the current fast service to Cannon Street via Maidstone is to be axed off-peak and replaced by a second slow service to Victoria.

"It seems that from 2009 Ashford will have an expensive fast service to St Pancras for a few business people and a much inferior service to other destinations for the rest of us."

But rail chiefs say it is a difficult balancing act between introducing the new trains and keeping the old services.

Southeastern spokesman Nigel Jarrett said: "We've tried to keep any cuts to existing services and destinations to a minimum, but at the same time we believe Ashford will benefit hugely from the high-speed link which will enable passengers to reach London in just 37 minutes instead of the 83 averaged at present, and from the excellent onward travel connections to be found at London St Pancras International."

"During the morning peak there will be six Class 395 services travelling at maximum speeds of 140mph into London, and two such trains per hour during the off-peak."

"In addition, there are a total of 21 trains during the morning peak and six an hour off-peak to other London termini, and this gives passengers considerable choice when planning their journeys into the capital."

## Car park re-opens for the season

THE Edinburgh Road multi-storey car park is temporarily open again to cater for the Christmas rush.

Traders were up in arms after plans to open it again earlier this month following maintenance work back-fired when structural problems on the entrance ramp were discovered.

Some shops claimed trade was down by up to 80 per cent as a result.

However, workers have come up with a stop-gap solution to ensure shoppers can use the car park and the town centre.

Structural scaffolding has been set up on the ramp to ensure it will be open right up to the New Year sales.

It is expected the car park will be closed again early next month to carry out the permanent repair work.

Lower business rates agreed while the car park was closed, will be extended during the repair phase.

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# Regular checks will determine if project is a success

# No change to shared space for 12 months

BY ED HILL

SAFETY monitoring on the shared space scheme will last for at least a year before any changes will be made.

The news comes following a safety inspection carried out by Kent County Council road officials last week, amid mounting unease by residents over the scheme.

The blurring of the road and pavement has made national headlines; being both mocked for the potential safety issues, and applauded by those keen to see the town embrace change and try something different. However, because of the unique nature of the design, assessing the danger is new territory for safety advisors.

County council spokesman Phil Scrivener said: "Normally when we put in traffic calming measures we would monitor accident numbers for three years before and after the changes.

"Previously we had a one way, three lane road and now we have something completely different."

Regular inspections will be carried out to assess how the scheme is working, with KCC vowing to take action if necessary.

Mr Scrivener said: "We are keeping a close eye on things because it is such a unique scheme."

The controversial project is the largest shared space project in the UK. The idea to create more equal road rights between traffic and pedestrians has been hailed as a success for road safety in Holland, where it was pioneered.



Picture: ED HILL

**CONTROVERSIAL:** The council will be monitoring driver and pedestrian habits in shared space for at least a year

The next safety assessment will be made early in the new year but there will be no dramatic changes to the scheme even after the year is up.

The most likely alterations will be more signs and possible changes to the light signals but costs will be kept to a minimum.

The council says it needs at least a year to evaluate safety on the road so it can include

changes in weather conditions and how it affects driving and walking habits.

The spokesman said: "At the moment the difficulty is because there are not many pedestrians coming from the other side of Elwick Road as that site has not yet been developed.

"We have to look at it over a whole year to get an idea of the traffic movements and pedestrian movements involved."

## Newtown Road back in action again after 10 month closure

AFTER ten months, Newtown Road opened to traffic again on Friday.

Extensive work has taken place to remove two redundant railway bridges and raise the height of a bridge which carries the Ashford to Hastings line.

By raising the bridge it will allow the latest buses – equipped with air-conditioning and GPS units – to use the road. The new service is due to commence in March. Services will also run later in the evenings, be revised for weekends and offer better connections for services to and from the railway station.

Services will operate every 30 minutes throughout the day and will be linked to other improvements being made to the whole town bus network by Stagecoach.

The route will also be used by the Smartlink bus service in 2012 planned to provide a high frequency service between new housing and leisure areas, commercial and retail outlets and the town's proposed new park and ride sites.

Some work will continue around the bridge area.

## Debenhams boss: Closure rumours are just not true

DEBENHAMS has denied widespread rumours it is set to close one of its newest outlets.

Speculation reached Yourashford last week that the outlet – the anchor store of the multi-million pound County Square extension – was to shut.

But the rumours were dismissed by the department store's head office.

Now it has taken the surprise step of writing to the local media to set the record straight.

Simon Fagg, the store's manager, said: "I thought I would take the unusual step in writing to you to hopefully put the record straight with regards to a number of rumours circulating around Ashford about Debenhams."

"We've been open since March of this year and my 150 staff love serving the people of Ashford with our unique Designers at Debenhams

offer. Unfortunately, almost on a daily basis, we are being asked about unsubstantiated rumours and I just wanted to put the record straight.

"We love being in Ashford and people keep asking us if we are closing after Christmas. We are not and have no intention of closing."

"I'm also asked if we are closing the top floor of the store or moving to a smaller store to make way for Primark. Again it's complete nonsense."

"We could think of no better place to showcase our fantastic product range."

"Hopefully this puts the record straight. Of course I'm always available to customers if they have any questions."

"I would just like to take this opportunity to thank everyone in Ashford who has shopped with us over the past nine months and to wish them all a happy Christmas."

## Fury as girl gang hits OAP centre

A GANG of mindless girl yobs – some as young as 11 – are believed to be behind cowardly vandalism of a popular day care centre for the elderly.

Not only did they damage the Age Concern Centre in Stanhope Road, used regularly by 50 OAPs, but they also smashed bird baths at a nearby sheltered housing centre.

Diana Tritton, supervisor at the Age Concern hit by the gang, told Yourashford: "They have broken all the plastic on the outside of the building.

"They have had bonfires next to the centre, they have turned on taps and left them running and lifted up manhole covers and left them open."

"All these things have to be replaced and we are a charity."

"I always felt the day centre was respected because people know it is a day centre for the elderly. That this could be done by a group of young girls, really upsets me."

Police have been informed about the damage and have increased patrols in the area.

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Your views on the closure of Woolworths. Search 'Ashford'

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**NEWS IN BRIEF**
**Bright sunshine leads to series of road accidents**

DAZZLED drivers caused a spate of accidents last week, prompting police to issue a warning if the conditions occur again.

The sun sitting low on the horizon and shining brightly meant motorists found their vision of the road ahead impaired.

Police were called to a number of minor accidents on Wednesday, in Godinton Park, Hythe Road, Park Farm, Orchard Heights, the Orbital Park and Charing.

PS Alice Parton said: "Coupled with the wet roads visibility was bad, and drivers were being dazzled. We urge everyone to take care."

**Santa helps parents to manage their spending**

FATHER Christmas took a break from his busy schedule to pop into Stanhope last week.

He set up his grotto at the parish rooms in Otterden Close and helped Moat Housing Association speak to parents about improving household finances. Moat is driving forward much of the regeneration of the estate.

Community development officer, Jan Henry, said: "Santa's grotto provided a relaxed environment for residents to learn more about getting involved with their community and managing household finances."

**Cancer unit celebrates life and Christmas with party**

BRAVE cancer patients past and present came together at the William Harvey recently to celebrate the work of the hospital's chemotherapy centre.

The Celia Blakely Centre staged the party to demonstrate people can recover from the treatment and continue with their lives.

Caroline Sunderland from the centre said: "For the first time, this year we organised a Christmas party. Invitations were open to past and present patients attending the unit, their families and carers."

**Awards ceremony marks dedication to learning**

MEMBERS of the Ashford 8 Prince's Trust group held an awards ceremony recently at the Furley Hall.

The event was a chance for members to celebrate what they have achieved on the 12-week course. The team received their certificates from the town's mayor, then read out personal statement about how they felt about the course, which parts they had enjoyed and what they will do next.

Jo Geddes, team project co-ordinator, said: "I was extremely proud of them all and their achievements."

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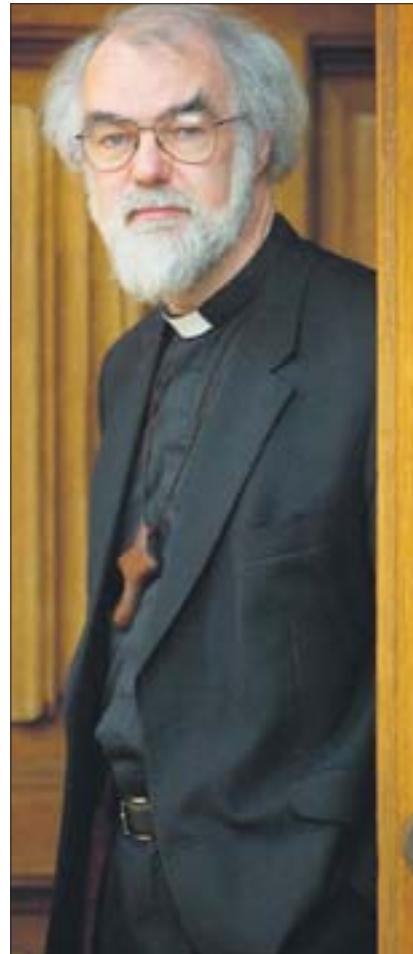
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**MESSAGE:** Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams says children are despised, exploited and feared in the modern world

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## A remarkable year of highs and lows

IT'S been another busy year for Canterbury Cathedral as it prepares to welcome packed congregations to its Christmas services.

Tickets for its annual Christmas Eve service were snapped up weeks in advance as worshippers looked to secure a seat for one of the most joyous occasions in the calendar.

Such was the demand that an additional service, 24 hours earlier, was added on a first-come, first-served basis for those missing out on the December 24 carol concert.

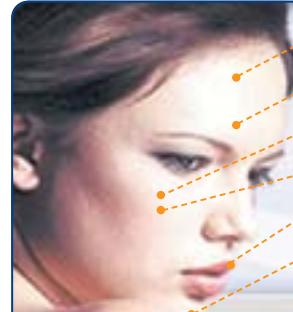
Earlier this year, the once-a-decade Lambeth Conference was staged in Canterbury, with some 800 Anglican bishops from across the world making the pilgrimage to the city for

three weeks of discussion and debate on the Church and its policies.

It was not without controversy, however, with some bishops boycotting the event and snubbing the personal invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Key to their concerns was the Church's stance on same-sex marriages and homosexual clergy.

You can watch clips about the Lambeth Conference and take a tour of Canterbury Cathedral itself – including remarkable views across the city from the Bell Harry Tower – by visiting our free broadband TV channel [www.yourkenttv.co.uk](http://www.yourkenttv.co.uk). Simply search separately for 'lambeth' and 'cathedral'.


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JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY: Dignitaries from Kent and the USA team up as the county takes delivery of the boat

# Replica sails in for 400th anniversary

A REPLICA of Discovery – one of the three ships which established the first English speaking colony in America – has been presented to the people of Kent.

It will be on permanent display in the grounds of Westenhanger Castle, just outside Folkestone – and marks the 400th anniversary of the founding of the Jamestown settlement in Virginia.

It also marks the long association between the county and the foundation of the USA.

A ceremony to mark the hand-over was attended by representatives from the USA, the castle and Kent County Council.

## New World

KCC deputy leader Alex King unveiled a commemorative plaque.

He said: "The handover event takes place exactly 402 years after the ships left London for the New World. People will be able to visit the ship at the castle and understand a bit more about the history of the times and they may even be surprised at the size of the boat which supported the first settlers across the Atlantic."

Mark Whitling is a direct descendant of Westenhanger Castle owner Sir Thomas Smythe who commissioned the original ship and he was present at the ceremony.

"People will see how small the ship is," he

■ BY NICK AMES

said. "It shows how brave those people were – there were 21 on board and they faced a hazardous voyage and bleak conditions and hostility when they arrived."

Discovery was one of a small fleet of three vessels which left London on December 19, 1606 and arrived in Chesapeake Bay on April 1607. The following month they sailed into the area which is now Jamestown and founded the colony.

Sir Robert Worcester is a member of the association which commemorates the landing as well as being chancellor of the University of Kent. He holds joint UK-US citizenship.

He explained: "Most people associate the Pilgrim Fathers with the founding of the USA when they landed in Massachusetts but the Jamestown colony had been there for some years.

"The pilgrims were amazed when the native Americans started speaking English to them – well they learnt it from the settlers who came across in the Discovery."

Also present at the opening was Mike Gayle of the US Embassy.

"I'm proud to be here to celebrate the joint history of the USA and the UK," he said.

"The foundation of the Jamestown colony was a historic occasion – for both countries and the entire world."

## Log-on to view the history of Discovery

TO take a tour of the Discovery and listen to experts talk about the unique story of Kent's role in the founding of the first English speaking colony in America go to [www.yourkenttv.co.uk](http://www.yourkenttv.co.uk) and search for 'Discovery'.

Representatives from the USA explain how important the occasion was for their country and the sense of pride they feel in the joint histories shared by Kent and Virginia while a direct descendant of the man who commissioned the voyage tells the heroic story of the settlers.

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## yourashford NEWS IN BRIEF

### Mean crook 'pays' as he pinches OAP's figurines

A COLD-HEARTED crook stole valuable Royal Worcester figures from a frail pensioner after forcing his way into her home.

And to add insult to injury, the thief even tried to 'pay' for the items as he made his escape.

The theft took place around midday on December 10 in Newenden, near Tenterden.

The intruder forced himself into the house belonging to an 83-year-old woman, informing her he had come to look at her property.

Unable to prevent him entering, he went into her bedroom and took five figures worth an estimated £2,000. As he passed her on his way out he gave the woman a small amount of money – despite her protests the items weren't for sale. He is described as white, aged 40-50, thin build, short dark brown hair and clean-shaven. He was wearing a heavy brown coat and spoke with a southern accent.



### Students show they have style in college contest

BUDGING hair stylists showed off their design skills by coming top in a competition staged at South Kent College.

Students on the hair courses were given an hour to come up with an inventive Christmas design – and display it on a practice 'head' used to test out styles.

Lyndon Gilbody from Willesborough and Gemma Elliott from New Romney were among the winners.

College principal, Monica Box, who handed out the prizes, said: "The standard of work here is the best I've seen."

### Hair-raising exploits raise cash for cancer cure fight

FACIAL hair growth on the lips of nine council staff has helped raise more than £1,000 towards a men's health charity campaign.

The nine Ashford council workers all grew moustaches as part of the Movember campaign which encourages the sponsored growing of a 'tache to help raise money for charity.

Set up in 2004, the charity's annual push is aimed at raising funds for male health issues – in particular prostate cancer. One of the team, Tim Parrett, said: "My father, father-in-law and uncle all have prostate cancer in differing states so this is an issue that is very important to me personally."

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- ★ Owl Sanctuary
- ★ Face Painting



20<sup>th</sup> December  
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see individual timings for events



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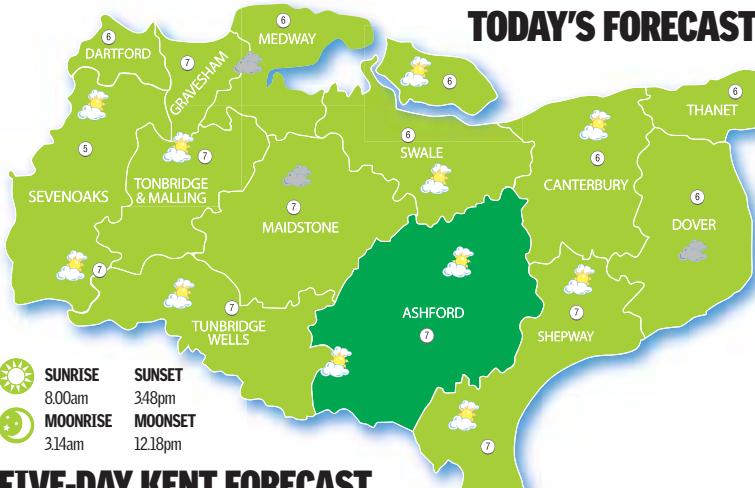
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## WEEKEND HIGH TIDES

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|-------------------|----------|---------|------|
| <b>Chatham</b>    | Saturday | 9:24am  | 5.1m |
|                   | Sunday   | 10:25am | 5.2m |
| <b>Dover</b>      | Saturday | 7:49am  | 5.7m |
|                   | Sunday   | 8:47am  | 5.8m |
| <b>Dungeness</b>  | Saturday | 7:41am  | 6.5m |
|                   | Sunday   | 8:35am  | 6.6m |
| <b>Ramsgate</b>   | Saturday | 8:19am  | 4.3m |
|                   | Sunday   | 9:17am  | 4.4m |
| <b>Sheerness</b>  | Saturday | 9:12am  | 4.9m |
|                   | Sunday   | 10:14am | 5.0m |
| <b>Whitstable</b> | Saturday | 9:17am  | 4.7m |
|                   | Sunday   | 10:21am | 4.8m |



**FESTIVE CLEAN-UP:** Take note of the changed rubbish collection dates over Christmas and the New Year

## Wheelie important Xmas information

ASHFORD council has published its refuse and recycling collection dates over Christmas and New Year.

There will be minor alterations due to the days on which the bank holidays fall on.

If your normal domestic refuse collection day is due to fall on Thursday, December 25, it will now be Friday, January 2. If it was Friday, December 26, it will now fall on Friday, January 2, and if it was on Thursday, January 1, it will now be Friday, January 2.

The council asks that waste is placed out for 6am on the days shown above.

Blue box recycling collections will work to a similar style.

If normal collection was due for Thursday December 25, it will now be Thursday, January 8. If Friday, December 26, it will now be Friday, January 9, and if Thursday, January 1, it will now be Friday, January 2.

However, the council says collections might still be a day later than the ones shown above.

The normal domestic refuse collection service will resume from 7am on Monday January 5.

For further information, please telephone 01233 331111, see the back page of Ashford Voice, or visit the council website, [www.ashford.gov.uk](http://www.ashford.gov.uk).

## AROUND THE WORLD YESTERDAY

|                   |      |                   |      |
|-------------------|------|-------------------|------|
| <b>Amsterdam</b>  | 10°C | <b>Madrid</b>     | 9°C  |
| <b>Athens</b>     | 14°C | <b>New York</b>   | 0°C  |
| <b>Barcelona</b>  | 13°C | <b>Paris</b>      | 9°C  |
| <b>Beijing</b>    | 1°C  | <b>Rome</b>       | 14°C |
| <b>Bombay</b>     | 30°C | <b>Sydney</b>     | 19°C |
| <b>Cape Town</b>  | 25°C | <b>Tenerife</b>   | 21°C |
| <b>Cardiff</b>    | 11°C | <b>Tokyo</b>      | 11°C |
| <b>Gibraltar</b>  | 14°C | <b>Vancouver</b>  | -6°C |
| <b>Hong Kong</b>  | 27°C | <b>Warsaw</b>     | 4°C  |
| <b>Las Palmas</b> | 19°C | <b>Wellington</b> | 17°C |

## FIVE-DAY KENT FORECAST

|                   | Thur | Fri  | Sat | Sun | Mon |  | Thur                 | Fri  | Sat  | Sun | Mon |     |
|-------------------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|--|----------------------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|
| <b>Ashford</b>    | 12°C | 13°C | 8°C | 6°C | 7°C |  | <b>Gravesend</b>     | 13°C | 12°C | 8°C | 7°C | 7°C |
| <b>Canterbury</b> | 11°C | 12°C | 7°C | 6°C | 7°C |  | <b>Maidstone</b>     | 12°C | 13°C | 8°C | 7°C | 7°C |
| <b>Chatham</b>    | 12°C | 12°C | 8°C | 6°C | 7°C |  | <b>Ramsgate</b>      | 11°C | 12°C | 7°C | 6°C | 7°C |
| <b>Dartford</b>   | 13°C | 12°C | 8°C | 7°C | 7°C |  | <b>Rochester</b>     | 12°C | 12°C | 8°C | 6°C | 7°C |
| <b>Dover</b>      | 10°C | 10°C | 7°C | 6°C | 7°C |  | <b>Sevenoaks</b>     | 10°C | 11°C | 7°C | 5°C | 5°C |
| <b>Faversham</b>  | 12°C | 12°C | 8°C | 6°C | 7°C |  | <b>Sittingbourne</b> | 12°C | 12°C | 8°C | 6°C | 7°C |
| <b>Folkestone</b> | 10°C | 10°C | 7°C | 6°C | 7°C |  | <b>Tonbridge</b>     | 11°C | 12°C | 8°C | 7°C | 6°C |
| <b>Gillingham</b> | 12°C | 12°C | 8°C | 6°C | 7°C |  | <b>Tun Wells</b>     | 11°C | 12°C | 8°C | 7°C | 6°C |

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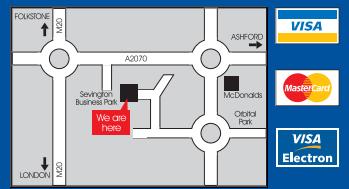
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## XMAS & NEW YEAR OPENING HOURS

|               |          |                |                     |
|---------------|----------|----------------|---------------------|
| Mon 22nd Dec  | 9am-2pm  | Sun 28th Dec   | 10am-4pm            |
| Tues 23rd Dec | Closed   | Mon 29th Dec   | 10am-4pm            |
| Christmas Eve | Closed   | Tues 30th Dec  | 10am-4pm            |
| Christmas Day | Closed   | Wed 31st Dec   | 10am-4pm            |
| Boxing Day    | Closed   | New Year's Day | 10am-4pm            |
| Sat 27th Dec  | 10am-4pm | Fri 2nd Jan    | Normal Hours Resume |



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## QUESTION & ANSWER

### FATHER CHRISTMAS



QA

Taking five minutes out of his hectic and demanding schedule to speak to **Chris Britcher**, Father Christmas reveals quite what makes him tick as he gets ready for the busiest day of his year.

**Q** Christmas Eve is almost upon us. Are you ready for your jaunt around the world?

**A** It's been a tough few months, actually. The credit crunch has hit us all quite hard up here. The cost of magic dust for the sleigh has gone through the roof. You think petrol prices get high – you have no idea! But we'll be ready come Christmas Eve. We always are.

**Q** How many helpers do you have, and are they really always checking up on everyone's behaviour?

**A** I am very fortunate to have an extended network of helpers. My happy band of elves work with me, preparing the toys and tending the reindeer, and they are crucial. They work very hard and without them I'd be stuck.

If they're not helping me here, they're keeping an eye out, checking who's been naughty or nice.

We have an extensive – now computerised, of course – list of who gets the good stuff. I also have helpers who go out and impersonate me in shops. As much as I would like to, I simply cannot be everywhere at the same time. Well, apart from on Christmas Eve, of course, but that's magic for you.

**Q** Do you have a favourite Christmas song?

**A** I'm rather partial to I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus. It's a bit cheeky, isn't it? In truth, I didn't kiss that person's mum – or should I say mom – because, as everyone knows, one of the tricks of the trade is that no one ever sees me. I've always assumed the

person they were kissing just used that as an excuse to get up to something they shouldn't. Mind you, some of the things you get to see while darting from home to home...

Well, let's just say it's not suitable for a family newspaper.

**Q** Which name do you prefer: Santa Claus, St Nick, Father Christmas? The list goes on...

**A** In America they do love calling me Santa, and in the UK I know there is a big popularity for Father Christmas. I don't mind, to be honest. What I do object to quite strongly is being called fat. I'm big-boned. I'm jolly. I'm red-faced. I am NOT fat.

**Q** What do you say to those who question your existence?

**A** It's very simple. If you doubt me, then don't hang up your stocking on Christmas Eve. I don't mind. It's just one less chimney for me to squeeze down and less weight we have to carry on the sleigh. Have I mentioned the cost of magic dust this year?

**Q** How are the reindeer? Are they ready for their big night?

**A** It's a bit like preparing an athlete for the Olympic Games. There's months of training, all building up to the big day when they have to perform. I have quite a herd to choose from and there is, as always, healthy competition for places.

Pulling my sleigh is considered the pinnacle of a reindeer's career, after all. Just take a look

at Rudolph. He was a regular and he makes a small fortune in commercial deals.

Every time you see a cup with his face on it, or a Christmas card, he gets paid. Normally in carrots or grain, but paid none the less. Become a sleigh regular and the rewards really are high.

**Q** How long do you spend in Kent on your rounds? And what do you think of the county?

**A** It's a trade secret as to how long I stay there on Christmas Eve, but what I can say is that I have frequently spent a long weekend in the county.

I can never stay anywhere too long as people spot the beard and start whispering. I'd love to stay for a proper holiday, though. It's a beautiful place, full of beautiful people. Most of whom, I might add, appear to have been good this year.

**Q** You've been doing this for a good few years now. Has retirement crossed your mind?

**A** It's a bit like Sir Alex Ferguson. There was once a time after a particularly annoying Christmas Eve I thought I'd throw it all in.

Lots of children seemed to almost wake up just as I entered the room, and the number of drunks on the streets was crazy.

But then, just as I think I've had enough, the next year will be great and I forget all the bad things. And, to be honest, where else could you get a job which offers such long holidays? It makes teachers look overworked!

Ho, ho, ho!

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Film highlights the dangers facing us all due to global warming. Search 'NASA'



Tom Howard reviews the week's local football news from around the county. Search 'football'



Julie Maddocks charts the history of one of Kent's best-known breweries. Search 'Fremlins'



Santa Claus lets the train take the strain ahead of his busiest day of the year. Search 'Tenterden'



The best job in the world? Kent's very own Willy Wonka shares his secrets. Search 'Chocolution'

## EDITOR'S CHOICE

You can view all these videos and others from around the county with the click of a mouse at...  
[yourkenttv.co.uk](http://yourkenttv.co.uk)

# Don't wait until spring to put up that birdbox

■ BY NICK AMES

THE Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has launched a winter appeal to gardeners.

Garden birds use nestboxes as shelter during the winter as well as for raising fledglings in spring, and the RSPB is appealing to people across the county to put boxes up in the right place now, ready for winter roosting.

Nestboxes don't always go unused in winter, as many believe, and gardeners may have some unexpected winter guests.

During the autumn and winter many birds will enter nestboxes looking for a suitable place to roost or feed. They then often use the same boxes for nesting in the spring.

But positioning them wrongly could lead to young birds baking to death if exposed to too much sunlight when the days warm up in spring.

Hester Phillips, of RSPB South East, said: "It might seem very early to be thinking about siting your nestbox, but as well as using them to shelter from the cold, birds will actually start shopping around for suitable nest sites soon, too. Birds often use nestboxes as a place

to roost or store food in winter. An amazing 61 wrens have been found roosting in one nestbox to shelter from the cold. The warmth generated in a communal roost can really save them in harsh winters.

"It's also essential that you choose the right place for your box. Please don't put them up on any old bit of wall or fence.

The direction is very important. Unless there are trees or buildings which shade the box during the day, they need to be facing between north and east to protect them from overheating in strong summer sunshine.

"This will also shelter them from our prevailing damp south-westerly winds."

Other tips include:

- Make sure birds have a clear flight-path to the nest without clutter directly in front of the entrance.
- Most nestboxes should not be located too close to the ground or on a fence or shed, where cats can lurk.
- Boxes for robins and wrens, however, should not be too high and are best placed among greenery to give additional protection from predators and the elements.
- If you have more than one nestbox, site them as far apart as possible as many birds like their own space and are highly territorial during the breeding season.



BOX CLEVER: Winter roosting sites are important to birds

## More than they bargained for as danger toys seized in raids

A CHRISTMAS crackdown by Kent Trading Standards officers led to the seizure of more than 2,000 potentially dangerous toys.

They formed part of a larger haul of almost 4,500 counterfeit items that also included clothing and footwear.

Officers seized the goods during raids at five premises in Snodland last week, with stock also taken from people using online auction sites from properties in Thanet and Romney Marsh.

Cllr Mike Hill, cabinet member for community services at Kent County Council, said: "These latest raids have helped save consumers money and protected children from receiving fake and possibly dangerous toys this Christmas."

"We are all attracted by bargains and these traders have been cashing in on that."

"At a time when businesses are feeling the pinch, too, it is important that action is taken against unscrupulous individuals and organisations."

The seized toys are currently being tested for safety, with the alleged offenders being dealt with on suspicion of the sale of counterfeit goods.



YOUTH THEATRE: The Marlowe in Canterbury will be one of the venues to benefit

## Stage is set for the next generation

THE Arts Council is funding a pioneering scheme over the next two years aimed at increasing theatre attendance by those aged under 26.

Theatres across the county will benefit from the plan to boost the popularity of live performances among young people by offering free admission.

Grants totaling £310,000 will fund the plan across the South East, where 22 theatres have been earmarked.

The free theatre scheme will start on Monday, February 16, and a website for booking tickets will start up in the new year. Arts Council regional head Judith Hibberd said: "We must make it easy for young people to experience powerful and inspiring art, show them that

the arts are for them and hopefully help create a new generation of arts audiences."

Mark Everett, director of the Marlowe Theatre in Canterbury, which has been offered £50,000, said: "Young people will be at the heart of the new Marlowe Theatre and this award will support essential early work to develop these new audiences."

Also in Kent, a £10,000 grant has been offered to both the Assembly Hall Theatre in Tunbridge Wells and the Performing Arts Network Kent Consortium, which includes the Gulbenkian Theatre in Canterbury, Trinity Theatre in Tunbridge Wells and the Theatre Royal Margate.

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# 2009 HOLIDAYS WINTER WARMERS



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|   |
|---|
| <b>£149pp*</b>  |
| <b>BOURNEMOUTH 26 Jan &amp; 23 Feb – 5 days</b>   |
| Just the thing to cheer you up after the festive season. Enjoy wonderful food, great places to visit & lots going on – and all for an amazing price! Ideally located to the sea front – 3* Bay View Court Hotel (HB) – 26 Jan / Ocean View Hotel – 23 Feb (HB) entertainment, leisure facilities & 2 full day excursions. |

|   |
|---|
| <b>£99pp*</b>   |
| <b>EASTBOURNE 30 Jan – 3 days</b>   |
| Eastbourne enjoys a glorious location, tucked under the rolling South Downs & the impressive Beachy Head. You'll have time to explore the town, take a stroll along the pretty seafront or admire the recently restored Victorian pier. Includes the 3* Chatsworth Hotel (HB), glass of wine on arrival & full day trip to Lewes. |

|   |
|---|
| <b>NO SINGLE SUPPLEMENT</b>   |
| <b>£129pp*</b>  |
| <b>TORQUAY 6 Feb – 4 days</b>   |
| Situated in the heart of the English Riviera a stylish resort combining modern facilities with the elegance of time gone by. The town is overflowing with vitality and places of interest. Why not enjoy a stroll along the Palm lined promenades giving a Mediterranean feel to your stay. Includes 3* Overmead Hotel (HB), complimentary taxi service to & from town. |

|   |
|---|
| <b>HALF TERM</b>  |
| <b>fr £249pp**</b>  |
| <b>DISNEYLAND® RESORT PARIS 16 Feb – 4 days</b>   |
| A fun filled family experience – Disney characters, thrill seeking rides & themed attractions. Both Disneyland® Park & Walt Disney Studios Park are accessible on your 3 day 'Hopper Pass' (included) as many times as you wish. Staying onsite at Disney's Sequoia Lodge Hotel (BB). |

|  |
|--|
| <b>NEW</b>   |
| <b>£139pp*</b>   |
| <b>ANTWERP – DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER! 27 Feb – 3 days</b>   |
| Antwerp, the diamond capital of the world, has long been a key trading place & port for Belgium. It offers a fantastic mixture of culture along with great shopping, cobbled streets & excellent restaurants. Beware the many chocolate shops will tempt even the most strong-willed! 4* Plaza Hotel in central Antwerp (BB) |

|   |
|---|
| <b>£99pp*</b>   |
| <b>WORTHING 27 Feb – 3 days</b>   |
| Situated between the beautiful South Downs & 5 miles of award winning coastline. The town offers superb theatres, friendly restaurants & fabulous shopping. Oscar Wilde found it such a 'charming town' & wrote 'The Importance of Being Earnest' whilst staying here. Close by is the outstanding countryside of East & West Sussex. Includes 3* Chatsworth Hotel (HB) & 1 full day excursion. |

|  |
|--|
| <b>£199pp*</b>   |
| <b>ISLE OF WIGHT "CRUISE WEEK", 2 Mar – 5 days</b>   |
| A break with a difference – soak up the sights & sounds of the Mediterranean all from the comfort of your seafaring hotel.....ss "Trouville"! Includes: 2* Trouville Hotel (HB), afternoon tea, nightly themed dinners, entertainment & optional excursions. |

|  |
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| <b>£199pp*</b>   |
| <b>AMSTERDAM 6 Mar – 4 days</b>  |
| An action packed city built around a spider's web of picturesque canals. Amsterdam offers world class museums, lively bars & enticing shops. Includes a 1/2 day Volendam trip, a pretty harbour town where ladies still wear traditional costumes. 4* hotel (BB), Amsterdam orientation & 1/2 day excursion. |

## 2009 DAY TRIPS

### NEW

### GREAT VALUE

| Date   | Destination  | Price<br>(Adult pp)^\ |
|--------|--|-----------------------|
| Sat 3  | London January Sales                                 | £10                   |
| Wed 7  | Bluewater or Lakeside                                | £10                   |
| Sat 10 | Lille Sales – <b>by Tunnel</b>                       | £19                   |
| Sat 10 | London Boat Show 55th Anniversary <b>New</b>         | £27                   |
| Sat 10 | Holiday On Ice Brighton "Mystery"                    | £39                   |
| Sun 11 | Holiday On Ice Brighton "Mystery"                    | £39                   |
| Wed 14 | London Museums                                       | £15                   |
| Sat 17 | Cirque Du Soleil "Quidam"                            | £85                   |
| Sat 17 | Holiday On Ice Brighton "Mystery"                    | £39                   |
| Sun 18 | Holiday On Ice Brighton "Mystery"                    | £39                   |
| Sun 18 | Bruges or Sluis – <b>by Tunnel</b>                   | £30                   |
| Wed 21 | Holiday On Ice Brighton "Mystery"                    | £39                   |
| Thu 22 | The Musical Museum With Lunch <b>New</b>             | £29                   |
| Sat 24 | Holiday On Ice Brighton "Mystery"                    | £39                   |
| Sun 25 | Holiday On Ice Brighton "Mystery"                    | £39                   |
| Sun 25 | London Eye, Lunch & River Cruise                     | £59                   |
| Mon 26 | Monday Special – Ypres & St Flora – <b>by Tunnel</b> | £20                   |
| Tue 27 | Pussycat Dolls At The O2 Arena                       | £59                   |
| Wed 28 | Mystery Day With Lunch                               | £20                   |
| Thu 29 | London & Royal Opera House Tour <b>New</b>           | £30                   |
| Sat 31 | Holiday On Ice Brighton "Mystery"                    | £39                   |

| Date   | Destination   | Price<br>(Adult pp)^\ |
|--------|---|-----------------------|
| Sun 1  | Holiday On Ice Brighton "Mystery"                         | £39                   |
| Thu 5  | Greenwich Maritime Museum <b>New</b>                      | £15                   |
| Sat 7  | London Showtime   | fr £54                |
| Mon 9  | Monday Special – Ostend & St Flora – <b>by Tunnel</b>     | £20                   |
| Wed 11 | Lunch At Moulin Snick, St Omer – <b>by Tunnel</b>         | £40                   |
| Thu 12 | Raf Museum London <b>New</b>                              | £15                   |
| Sat 14 | Valentines Love Is In The Air – London Eye & Chocolates   | £39                   |
| Sun 15 | London Eye, Lunch & River Cruise                          | £59                   |
| Tue 17 | London Zoo  | £29                   |
| Wed 18 | Kew Gardens Tropical Plants 250th Anniversary             | £30                   |
| Thu 19 | Boulogne & Hypermarket – <b>by Tunnel</b>                 | £25                   |
| Sat 21 | Disneyland® Resort Paris – <b>by Tunnel</b>               | £65                   |
| Sun 22 | Bruges or Sluis – <b>by Tunnel</b>                        | £30                   |
| Tue 24 | Imperial War Museum & Ian Fleming Exhibition (James Bond) | £25                   |
| Wed 25 | Sound Of Music  | £49                   |
| Thu 26 | Mystery Day   | £15                   |
| Sat 28 | Lakeside or Romford Market                                | £17                   |

| Date   | Destination                                       | Price<br>(Adult pp)^\  |
|--------|---|------------------------|
| Mon 2  | Monday Special – Ghent – <b>by Tunnel</b>         | £20                    |
| Wed 4  | National Gallery & Picasso Exhibition <b>New</b>  | £29                    |
| Fri 6  | Dirty Dancing                                     | £59                    |
| Sat 7  | The Secret World Of Bletchley Park <b>New</b>     | £29                    |
| Sun 8  | Crofts Dog Show                                   | £40                    |
| Tue 10 | Paris In Springtime – <b>by Tunnel</b>            | £40                    |
| Wed 11 | Lunch At Moulin Snick, St Omer – <b>by Tunnel</b> | £40                    |
| Thu 12 | Milestones Living History Museum <b>New</b>       | £25                    |
| Sun 15 | Bruges or Sluis – <b>by Tunnel</b>                | £30                    |
| Tue 17 | Windsor Lunch Cruise <b>New</b>                   | £35                    |
| Thu 19 | Wisley Gardens At Springtime                      | £25                    |
| Sat 21 | London Showtime                                   | fr £54                 |
| Sat 21 | Hampton Court Floramania <b>New</b>               | £30                    |
| Sun 22 | London Eye, Lunch & River Cruise                  | <b>Mothers Day</b> £59 |
| Sun 22 | Classical Spectacular with lunch                  | £83                    |
| Tue 24 | Arras – <b>by Tunnel</b>                          | £25                    |
| Wed 25 | Kew Gardens At Springtime 250th Anniversary       | £30                    |
| Thu 26 | Ideal Home Show                                   | £30                    |
| Sat 28 | Disney Live – Mickey's Magic Show <b>New</b>      | £39                    |
| Sat 28 | Ideal Home Show                                   | £30                    |
| Sun 29 | Ideal Home Show                                   | £30                    |
| Sun 29 | Bruges or Sluis – <b>by Tunnel</b>                | £30                    |
| Tue 31 | Thames Lunch Cruise & London <b>New</b>           | £40                    |

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# Here's a few sobering thoughts

■ BY NICK AMES

POLICE across the county have secured significant convictions to provide a sobering reminder about road safety and the consequences of breaking the law.

The convictions come as Kent Police reaches the half way stage of its Christmas anti-drink and drug driving campaign which is using cutting edge technology and new tactics to detect rogue drivers.

To date, since the campaign started on December 1:

- A total of 143 people have been arrested for drink or drug driving
- Three people have been jailed for death by dangerous driving
- There have been nine fatal, or potentially fatal, collisions
- Of the above, four people have died.

In one of the cases, a motorist on a lifetime driving ban in Ireland, who killed a 52-year-old Sheerness man in a motorway collision, has been jailed for nine years. Stephen O'Reilly reached speeds of more than 110mph shortly before the collision, on the M2 near Sittingbourne, in June, this year.

He was also drinking beer at the wheel. Head of the serious collision investigation unit, Inspector Paul Sellwood, said: "This has been a lengthy investigation for the unit, involving close working with the police and



**NINE YEARS:**  
Stephen O'Reilly



**£1,000 FINE:**  
David Hoskins



**TRUTH AND CONSEQUENCES:** Dangerous driving and flouting the law can devastate lives – and will not be tolerated, say Kent Police

courts in the Republic of Ireland. We are very satisfied for the family with the outcome. O'Reilly is a career criminal who has not only given a family a life sentence but he will also have to live with the consequences of his driving for the rest of his life."

In another case, Maidstone businessman David Hoskins pleaded guilty to allowing his employee, Martin Crealock, to drive a work vehicle when it wasn't insured for him to drive.

Hoskins received a £1,000 fine and was made to pay £365 costs. He was also given six

penalty points on his licence.

This is the first time Kent Police can recall anyone receiving the maximum fine and penalty points for permitting another person to drive uninsured.

Martin Crealock was sentenced earlier this year at Maidstone Crown Court, where he received 15 months in jail and was disqualified from driving for four years.

Finally, two police officers were seriously injured when their marked car was hit from behind by 27-year-old Lee Staples, in April.

It was parked on the hard shoulder at junc-

tion two of the M2 coast-bound carriageway with all the necessary emergency lighting.

The collision was so serious the officers had to be cut from the wreckage by the Kent Fire and Rescue Service.

Staples couldn't give a reasonable reason for colliding with the police vehicle and alcohol and drug abuse were ruled out.

He was subsequently reported for careless driving and pleaded guilty. He was fined £400 and had to pay £60 court costs and a £15 victim surcharge. He was also disqualified from driving for 12 months.

## Helping businesses weather the storm

BUSINESSES struggling amid the economic downturn have been told to push ahead in the new year with confidence.

Kent County Council chiefs have underlined their commitment to supporting local industry and cabinet member for regeneration Kevin Lynes says it intends to transform the county into what he's dubbed 'the Garden of Enterprise'.

Cllr Lynes outlined the policies he hopes will help the county weather

the downturn. He said: "Successful businesses create wealth, jobs and opportunities in the county. KCC has a key role in the Kent economy. It is a major employer and spends £360m annually on goods and services.

"We want the Kent economy to grow and develop – for Kent to be the Garden of Enterprise."

It comes after KCC leader Paul Carter recently unveiled a host of measures to support local business.

Cllr Lynes said: "We want to develop a new relationship with business, an honest and practical relationship which delivers further support to increase opportunities and growth.

"We therefore set out ten commitments under the banner Backing Kent Business. These commitments are KCC's promise for a step change in how we support Kent business.

"I am determined to deliver these commitments to support Kent business."

## Spiking victim's warning to party people

PARTYGOERS are being warned of the dangers of drink-spiking by a woman who became a victim.

Francesa Fraser, 22, has been handing out posters and drinks mats to pubs and clubs across the county to raise awareness.

Spiking is on the increase according to campaigners, who say many people do not realise how dangerous it can be.

Ms Fraser, who was given a cup of tea spiked with ecstasy, said the smoking ban had meant more people leaving drinks unattended.

She said: "People need to make sure they have their drink with them at all times and try not to leave it anywhere when they want a cigarette."

She has also been giving out brightly-coloured bottle stoppers, which only allow a straw for drinking. "The stoppers cost just 2p," she said. "We want to make pubs and clubs aware they are inexpensive and can lower the risk of drinks being spiked."



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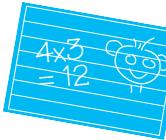
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# yourashfordschools



## BREAK TIME

### Seasonal sparkle to encourage cycling

TINSEL and glitter were used to give bicycles a festive makeover at Phoenix Primary School.

The school in Kennington is one of 12 in the town that participate in the Bike It scheme run by the Sustrans cycle charity.

Bike It officer, David Robert said: "It is great to work with such an enthusiastic school. We know from research that on average 47 per cent of children would like



to cycle to school but only two per cent actually do across the UK.

"We must continue to work with schools to

narrow this gap. Cycling has so many benefits for pupils, such as improved health, confidence and concentration as well as benefits for the environment."

The charity says the number of children now cycling to school has trebled since it began the campaign. Phoenix School installed a large bike shelter this term as part of its new building works.

### Classic performance



CLASSICS students at Ashford School recently performed Medea by the Greek tragedian Euripides.

The tale tells the story of Medea, a beautiful princess, and how she is betrayed by her husband Jason.

They were joined by students from the Friars Prep School and a student from the Norton Knatchbull.

# Opening ceremony is simply child's play

■ BY ED HILL

STAFF and pupils at Egerton Primary School recently received a visit from a Government minister.

Jim Knight, minister of state for schools and learning, was at the school to officially open the new extension to its playground.

The £68,000 project complies with all the latest regulations, including giving better access to disabled children and wheelchair users.

The Friends of Egerton School contributed £20,000 towards the cost of the new playground, which was needed to accommodate the 60 new students who are now taught at the school.

As well as safety features, it includes three bright 'rubber-crumb surfaced trim trails' giving youngsters the opportunity for exercising and developing co-ordination skills whilst having fun.

During his visit, Mr Knight toured the playground extension and spent time talking to the children. He also presented certificates to pupils Rebecca Webb and Sebastian Huntley, whose winning designs are incorporated on the commemorative plaque.

By extending the playground to the side of the playing field, the school in Egerton has retained a sports area for football, athletics, and other grass sports.

The wildlife area now at the end of the new playground has also become more accessible than previously so it can be integrated into classroom studies.

**SEND your schools news and pictures to [yourashford@kosmedia.co.uk](mailto:yourashford@kosmedia.co.uk). You can also upload your own video clips of schools events on to [www.yourkenttv.co.uk](http://www.yourkenttv.co.uk)**



**VISITOR:** Government minister Jim Knight spent time talking to children at Egerton Primary School

Traditional playground games will be marked on the ground surfaces during the spring term, and the extra space will allow the children to use new equipment that has hitherto not been utilised due to lack of room.

The Government has announced it is to introduce more activity areas in playgrounds, although governors at Egerton had already decided to press ahead with the scheme.

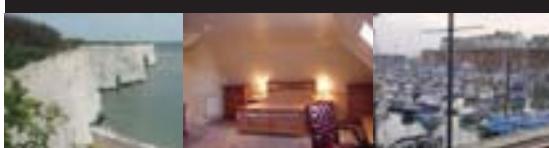
Lara Gibbons, business manager at the

school, said: "It is good for the school to be at the forefront of this movement.

"Our children will be benefitting from a safe and interesting play area at least two years before other schools in the area."

Headteacher Linda Oliver said: "In our next official returns, which include the period that our pupils have been testing the playground, our statistics for grazed knees will show a remarkable improvement."

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# yourashfordblogger

Each week we get a mystery writer to air their views on living in the district of Ashford

## Goodwill to all men is once again a part of the season

I AM very much of the opinion that Christmas is the best, most exciting time of the year.

I find little to dislike about it. Everyone's mood is lifted, the lights and the tinsel remind me of a happy childhood, my children are all keen to ingratiate themselves with me in order to get nice pressies, and the TV actually has something on worth watching most nights.

However, in recent years, the true spirit of Christmas has been diluted. Aside from the religious overtones and the age-old pagan traditions of this time of year, the great capitalism monster has turned it into a money-making frenzy. Nothing necessarily wrong with that, but an issue when it eclipses everything else.

Much has been written in years gone by on how commercialism is taking the soul out of this special period. But this year, amid all the doom, gloom and uncertainty which the economic downturn has dragged with it, has come

something of a refreshing change.

Because given everyone is either watching the pennies, or simply wondering where the next penny is going to come from, the crassest of commercial activity has been knocked on the head this year.

The result? We haven't all been told we are failing as parents/partners/friends if we don't splash out on some extravagant gift as a gesture of our love.

Even the most money-grabbing of multinational brands know the climate is not right for such a campaign. And few can afford such items anyway.

A bit of clever shopping around, and taking advantage of sales, you can even come out of this shopping frenzy with your credit card bill confined to just a couple of pages.

We have all been left with the feeling that, just for once, we are going to have to enjoy Christmas on a very traditional level - going back to basics, if you will.

Yes, this year we are going to be having to rely on those old chestnuts of fellow human

company to put a spring in our step. Of family, of friends, of each other.

And without wishing to come over all Thought For A Day-ey, that can be no bad thing.

Granted, being in close proximity to friends and particularly family, can unsettle even the most placid of people, but who knows, the fact we are all in this boat of uncertainty, sailing the choppy waters of the economic storm, could actually generate something of a Blitz spirit.

It could bring us all a little closer together.

And if anything good is to come out of this miserable time of worries and fears, a gentle reminder of the goodness which resides in one another and all of mankind, could be just the tonic.

I'll certainly raise a glass of something cheap and sparkly to that.

• **EDITOR'S NOTE:** All blogs are supplied with full name and address of the authors. They do not reflect the view of the newspaper but are designed to give our readers the chance to air their views.

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We want to hear your views



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If there is a story in your area you think we should be covering contact the editor, **Chris Britcher**, on **01303 817171** or email him on the details above. If you want to be the next Ashford blogger then all you have to do is submit an article to us (of around 550 words) and email it to the editor. And don't forget, for all the latest news and video from your town log-on to [www.yourashford.co.uk](http://www.yourashford.co.uk).

Write to The Editor, YourAshford, KoS Media, Apple Barn, Hythe Road, Smeeth, Ashford, Kent TN25 6SR.

• We cannot guarantee all articles will be published and all are at the editor's discretion



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# yourcompetition

## WIN a VIP family trip around Port Lympne

Picture: ADY KERRY

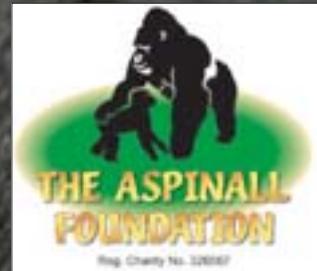
THE Aspinall Foundation, in conjunction with KOS Media are offering one lucky family a VIP trip around Port Lympne Wild Animal Park.

This will include free entry to the park and a trip in a bespoke safari vehicle around the African Experience where over 300 animals roam in a 100 acre site overlooking breathtaking views of the Channel towards France. Later, the lucky winners can explore the 600 acre park discovering animals such as lions, tigers, snow and clouded leopards, red pandas, numerous species of monkey, black rhino and elephants as well as the famous collection of western lowland gorillas.

There are two ways to enter the competition and the first ensures, with little effort on your part, you are able to regularly help raise funds to save a variety of endangered species.

All you have to do is sign up for a free Aspinall prepaid Maestro card provided in conjunction with Mastercard and M-cube. Normally the prepaid card costs £9.99, but in conjunction with this competition it won't cost you a penny.

The card can be used like a debit card but is topped up like a mobile phone and 100 per cent of the profits associated with using it are given back to the Aspinall Foundation.



By using your card, you will help to support the Foundation's African Projects in the Congo and Gabon as well as our work in the UK and other parts of the world. The prepaid card can be used to shop securely online, spend while on holiday, manage business expenses and cash flow, help children budget their pocket money or just use it for all of your daily spending – both in the UK and abroad! Every transaction will help the conservation and breeding programmes at Port Lympne and Howletts Wild Animal Parks.

The card is absolutely free, no credit check is required and it is quick, easy and secure to apply on line. The card is a safe alternative to carrying cash and is accepted worldwide.

The account can be managed online with instant top up via the Post Office

available too. The card is totally safe for all online transactions and protects you from identity fraud. It also gives you a load of discounts on High Street products including a 10 per cent discount in Howletts and Port Lympne cafes and gift shops.

To enter the competition and obtain this card just visit [www.savinggorillas.com](http://www.savinggorillas.com) and insert "KOS" when asked where you heard about the card. In the drop down box below insert "KOS". On receipt of the card you can top it up online and take advantage of the rewards on offer. It can be used anywhere you see the Maestro or MasterCard logo worldwide.

However, if you don't want to sign up for the card you can also still enter the competition by sending a postcard with the heading "ASPINALL PREPAID CARD - KOS" with your name, e-mail address (if applicable), address, and daytime telephone number to Marketing Department (KOS comp), Port Lympne Wild Animal Park, Lympne, Near Hythe, Kent, CT21 4PD. The closing date is January 5th, 2009.

For more information about Howletts, Port Lympne and the Aspinall Foundation see [www.totallywild.net](http://www.totallywild.net).

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The VIP trip around Port Lympne is for a family of up to two adults and three children.



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# Historic venue for all the family

### The Walnut Tree

THE inn now known as The Walnut Tree started life during the reign of King Richard II who ruled England from 1377 to 1399.

It was no more than a timber framed hut with a thatched roof during that time but it is now one of the county's best-known village inns.

Ale was brewed on the premises in the 17th century and a couple of hundred years later the infamous smugglers known as the Aldington Gang roamed the area nearby.

The ghost of one of them, namely George Ransley, is still said to wander around haunting

the atmospheric old building. Sizzling grillstones are a feature of the fine food on offer with homecooking to the fore.

The bar has recently been refurbished and the pub has two log fires - perfect to sit by during the festive season.

On the last Thursday of every month there is a special "two wine and dine" offer - two courses for two people, plus wine for two at a cost of £22.

The pub is very family-friendly and on New Year's Eve there will be a karaoke evening with a complementary buffet.

Food is served on New Year's Day from midday until 5pm and on Boxing Day evening from 5pm to 8pm.



# Medieval food to enjoy down on the farm

### Elvey Farm

THIS is a medieval farmhouse in a magical setting in the village of Pluckley and a visit is like stepping back in time.

Opening its doors for business last Christmas, Meridian TV's Jeff Moody is the man behind what has become one of the county's top venues when it comes to stylish dining.

Since then, Jeff and partner Simon have been amazed at the number of people who come to eat at their restaurant.

"We see so many familiar faces," said Jeff. "Some people come back week after week, which is lovely because you get to know them."

The restaurant is in a 16th century barn and enjoys a wealth of period features and



amazing views over the fields.

Specialising in old-fashioned Kentish recipes, it showcases

some of the best local dishes.

The kitchen has also resurrected some old classics, such as

game meatballs and apple and cobnut pudding. These sit comfortably alongside modern alternatives such as salmon and prawn terrine.

The restaurant is open seven days a week in December and in January from Wednesdays to Saturdays in the evening and for Sunday lunch.

Chef Claire Phillips has created a dish called A Taste of Kent which includes hop picker's pie, hunter's pie and venison and chestnut casserole.

Staff have tracked down many of the old recipes to create truly unique food such as a Watercress Lady's Lunch and Thresher Flan. Each dish tells a story and staff say they would love to cook for actor David Tennant - TV's time-travelling Dr Who - to give him a real taste of the past.

### CHEF RECOMMENDS

#### Elvey Farm

Start with game meatballs: pheasant, venison and wild boar with red-onion relish, a hearty alternative to the humble meatball. Then hop pickers pie, a Kentish take on traditional steak and mushroom pie, with onions, herbs and ale gravy.

#### The George at Lydd

Black pudding and seared scallops or stuffed mushrooms to start. Then try the homemade puff pastry steak and ale pie or homemade stilton and spinach pie. End with chocolate lumpy bumpy cake or fresh fruit meringue tower.

#### The Walnut Tree

Start with Karen's warming homemade soup. Then why not follow this up with the hot salt beef sandwich. Finally, finish off the meal with a traditional Kentish gypsy tart.

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# yourletters

## TALK TIME

**KAREN  
BELL**

The manager of Kiln Café in Newtown Road discusses her job and redevelopment of the area.

### How long have you been here?

I run the cafe and have been here for 12 years. The building used to be the old acetylene stores when it was part of the railway works back in the early 1900s. It is Grade II-listed. There are four kilns in each corner. The brickwork is three-and-a-half-feet thick in case of explosions.

### How did you get into the business?

I am a chef by trade. I saw the cafe as a challenge. Originally I wanted to supply food for the homeless people but it is hard, financially, to balance the books.

### How has all the building work around you affected the business?

It has been very hard the last year because of the work on the Newtown Bridge. It has meant a lot of the passing trade we had gone, but I have had people who are working on the bridge coming in. I have given an extra sausage to all the people who have been willing to drive all the way round to get to the cafe. The bridge opened up last week so I hope trade will pick up again. I have invested a lot of money in the business this year just to keep it afloat.

### What does the future hold?

I have a five-year lease and I would like to continue in this building if I can. I will be here while they do all the work on the old railway shed buildings and I am in negotiations to continue.

I like to paint the inside of the cafe different colours each year. I also have some old train buffers to use as stools, although they are a bit cold. At the moment I have 3,000 photographs on the walls of all the people who have come into the cafe and of all the workers involved in the building work.



## YOUR LETTERS

### We can now share in more of town

My word, what a fuss we are all making over the shared space scheme. Reading some of the reactions from your readers you'd think men, women and children were being ploughed down on a daily basis.

Perhaps it is worth casting your mind back to how things used to be. When instead of shared space we had four lanes of fast-moving traffic making crossing the road almost impossible.

What's more the ring road, as it was, acted like a collar restricting the growth of the town.

The shared space scheme has already allowed pedestrians to access areas previously closed off due to the traffic.

Let's, at the very least, give it a chance. Who knows, it may actually deliver some truly impressive results.

J King  
Willesborough

### Roads' scheme is great for walkers

I may be the only one in Ashford, but I think shared space makes the world of difference to our town. Instead of cars being in charge, the humble pedestrian has drawn level. I applaud it and the way it has empowered the 'little man' once again.

Ian Jacob  
By email

### We need changes to move forward

I read with interest your article



### Warning over plans for police authority shake-up

tor how Kent Police spend our hard-earned tax payers' money?

Ann states direct elections would seriously put at risk the "jobs for the boys brigade" who are of course non-political.

I suspect Ann is suggesting we only want the three monkey situation, say nothing, ask nothing, hear nothing and who are all too busy with their "other" jobs to criticise Kent Police; nice work if you can get it.

God forbid we could end up with fair-minded, non-extremist, non-political pressure groups, who are simply looking to offer assurances, assistance, and criticism when necessary on how policing is carried out in the county.

Ann's brigade would not want their front doors kicked in during the night over any "bull in the china shop" elected member who may criticise policing policies!

Ann says this wonderful tried and tested policing structure in place should not be put at risk. Why? Is that not how we achieve change for the better or do you agree with Robert Mugabe's perception Ann, change nothing?

I would argue any newly elected individuals may criticise the police for wasting £2 million on policing the protesters at the Isle of Grain, or sending three police cars and six officers to "neighbour" situations, or worse still have two police officers sitting in a car for two hours in an attempt to prevent a potential breach, or sending four officers to arrest a non-criminalised person over a "domestic" dispute, a day later!

Forget the burglars, rapists, drug dealers, vandals, etc. Let's

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on the Police Authority shake-up and Ann Barnes' concerns.

How dare anyone suggest or risk the potential impartiality of

the Kent Police Authority by having direct elections to vote onto the board lay persons whose sole responsibility would be to moni-

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spend the cash on policing protesters for fear they may be "political activists". Now that is well worth policing.

I agree with Ann that politics should be kept out of policing, as indeed with police officers investigating their colleagues (police investigating police) as they do at present. Ex-police officers should be kept out of any investigation of complaint. Now that I would vote for Ann, if you would allow us.

**Kenneth Little**  
By email

## Police should not be an unknown force to us

The news Kent Police are investing cash in stun guns is not great for people who wish the force to police by consent rather than be seen as some sort of occupying force.



I understand the way of life for many people has changed and society is no longer as cohesive as it once was. The

neighbourhood bobby has probably gone forever – but police riding around in cars, armed and very rarely interacting with the public unless it is in a confrontational way is not good news for anyone.

Rather than spending all this cash, what about a few more officers carrying out foot patrols, talking to people and generally making their presence known?

**Harry Miles**  
By email

## USA example shows we shouldn't use tasers

Taser guns are not a good idea as their use in the USA has shown.

In a country where armed police are the norm they have attracted far more criticism than the normal handguns which officers carry as a matter of routine.

**Philippa Hodges**  
By email

## Computer donations make a real difference

The charity which sends old computers to Africa needs to be commended and people who donate to it should feel proud of themselves.

A friend recently went to Sierra Leone and was impressed to see each class at a village school had access to a computer – all of which had been donated by people from the UK. So helping in this manner really does make a difference to the lives of children in Africa.

**Alex Rodgers**  
By email

## Khan should have been given international place

It is a shame Amjad Khan was not picked for England in the recent Test match against India which the home side won in such dramatic fashion.

I'm sure he would have shown more fight than bowlers such as Anderson and Harmison, who seemed to lack any sort of idea of how to bowl. I feel his style and ability to reverse swing the ball would have proved far more effective in trying to curtail the Indians than anyone else in the

England side – possibly excepting Flintoff. He has shown this for Kent and he should have had the chance to show it for England.

**Brian Ledger**  
By email

## Spare a thought for the employees of Woolworths

How upsetting it must have been for the staff of Woolworths to watch as people scrambled for bargains when they knew they were about to lose their jobs. Have these people no feeling

for the thoughts of those who knew they were losing their jobs at Christmas?

**Tracey Lewis**  
By email

## Excess spending will not solve recession problems

The credit crunch is on everyone's lips but the number of people walking down high streets loaded down with gifts is amazing.

I just want to shout "no" at them – what do they think will be achieved by bombarding

people with presents and then paying off the bills for the next nine months?

**Ian Hughes**  
By email

## Shopping around to bite off a better bargain

I went into Woolworths looking for a bargain and bought some chocolates. Job done, but popped into Morrisons to see if they had anything. They did – the same at £1 each less.

**Patricia Lucas**, By email

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**HE'S BEHIND YOU!** Aladdin is at the Assembly Hall Theatre, Tunbridge Wells. Below left, King of the Jungle Joe Swash is Buttons in Cinderella at the Central Theatre, Chatham, while Steve Guttenberg comes all the way from Hollywood to Bromley to star in Cinderella

# Festive fun for families

**Yell your way around the county's pantos**

**FAMILY fun is in plentiful supply this Christmas with an array of pantomimes across the county.**

Emma Barton, who played Honey in EastEnders, stars alongside children's TV favourite Stephen Mulhern and local legend Dave Lee in Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.

The show runs at The Marlowe Theatre, Canterbury, until Sunday, January 18. Phone 01227 787787, or book online at [www.marlowetheatre.com](http://www.marlowetheatre.com).

Jack and the Beanstalk at the Hazlitt Theatre, Maidstone, stars former Hollyoaks actor Jake Hendriks, who played Father Kieron in the teen soap. Catch him in action until Sunday, January 4. Tickets are available from 0870 4000890 or [www.leascliffhall.org.uk](http://www.leascliffhall.org.uk).

Local actor Alex Tomkins is in Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves at the Theatre Royal Margate until Saturday, January 3. To book, phone 01227 787787 or 0845 1301786.

The Bill's Chris Ellison pounds a new beat as the dastardly Abanazar in Aladdin at the Assembly Hall Theatre, Tunbridge Wells. He stars alongside GMTV's Toonattik's Anna Williamson until Sunday, January 4. Phone 01892 530613/532072, or see [www.assemblyhalltheatre.co.uk](http://www.assemblyhalltheatre.co.uk).

The Central Theatre in Chatham is staging Cinderella this year and I'm A Celebrity... star Joe Swash swings in to play Buttons until Sunday, January 4. Phone 01634 338338, or see [www.medway.gov.uk/theatres](http://www.medway.gov.uk/theatres).

Captain Hook's sidekick Snee is played by Joe Pasquale in Peter Pan at the Orchard Theatre, Dartford. Enjoy the fun until Sunday, January

### FAMILY PANTOMIME FUN

Various dates  
Various venues, countywide



able from 01622 758611 or [www.hazlittartscentre.co.uk](http://www.hazlittartscentre.co.uk).

The cast of Dick Whittington is ready to take audiences at the Leas Cliff Hall, Folkestone, on a journey to find the streets paved with gold.

Kate Wright is Dick, while Bob Osborne plays Sarah the Cook and Natalie Hubbard is Captain Cods Eye. Tickets for the show, which runs until Saturday, January 10, are available from 0870 4000890 or [www.leascliffhall.org.uk](http://www.leascliffhall.org.uk).

Local actor Alex Tomkins is in Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves at the Theatre Royal Margate until Saturday, January 3. To book, phone 01227 787787 or 0845 1301786.

The Bill's Chris Ellison pounds a new beat as the dastardly Abanazar in Aladdin at the Assembly Hall Theatre, Tunbridge Wells. He stars alongside GMTV's Toonattik's Anna Williamson until Sunday, January 4. Phone 01892 530613/532072, or see [www.assemblyhalltheatre.co.uk](http://www.assemblyhalltheatre.co.uk).

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Captain Hook's sidekick Snee is played by Joe Pasquale in Peter Pan at the Orchard Theatre, Dartford. Enjoy the fun until Sunday, January



1. For tickets, phone 01322 220000, or see [www.orchardtheatre.co.uk](http://www.orchardtheatre.co.uk).

Dick Whittington shoulders his backpack at the Granville Theatre, Ramsgate, until Sunday, January 4. For tickets, phone 01843 591750.

Police Academy star Steve Guttenberg is in Cinderella at The Churchill in Bromley. He is playing alongside comedienne Helen Lederer until Sunday, January 18. Phone the box office on 0870 060 6620, or book at [www.churchilltheatre.co.uk](http://www.churchilltheatre.co.uk).

Former Big Brother housemate Paul 'Bubble' Ferguson stars in Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs at the Swallows Leisure Centre, Sittingbourne.

The show, which runs until Sunday, December 28, also features CBBC's Tracy Beaker star Ben Hanson and Briony Price, who rose to fame on How Do You Solve A Problem Like Maria? To book, call 01795 420420.



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## SAFARI

Thursday, January 1  
Port Lympne  
Wild Animal Park, near Hythe

START the New Year by connecting with nature on a breathtaking safari at Port Lympne Wild Animal Park.

Following the excesses of Christmas, a ride in the park's specially commissioned vehicle would be just the way to blow away the cobwebs.

Discover the many animals roaming free in the 100-acre African Experience site, against the backdrop of stunning views across Romney Marsh towards France.

Visitors could spot giraffe, zebra, wildebeest, ostrich, black rhino, sitatunga, blue wildebeest, eland, Defassa waterbuck, red lechwe, Grant's and Grevy's zebras and more.

Each safari tour will be accompanied by a guide who will answer questions about conservation projects and the animals. Set in 600 acres, the park is home to the largest breeding herd of



Picture: NEVILLE BUCK

## I SHOULD COCO BOXING DAY MASKED BALL

Friday, December 26  
The Loft, Maidstone



CLUBBERS can expect to bump into anyone from Batman to Fonejacker at a special event on Boxing Day. The I Should Coco Boxing



## FRANCES KNIGHT

Wednesday, December 31  
Harbour Café Bar, Margate



WELCOME the New Year in the company of acclaimed jazz pianist Frances Knight.

The Canterbury-based performer has been involved in the London and South East jazz scene for many years and has impressed critics with her fantastic musical skills.

She has written, performed and recorded with artists such as Jan Ponsford, Sarah Jane Morris, Paul Booth and Tony Coe.

Showing a taste for the exotic, Knight also plays with London's hottest Argentinian tango band Los Mareados. She also studies the bandoneon, a small accordion popular in Latin America.

Her appearance is the latest in a new series of concerts linked to the famous Vortex Jazz Club in London.

Floor singers are invited to take part in the gig and it would be an impressive addition to any CV to say they had performed with Frances Knight. For more information, phone the venue on 01843 290110.

Tickets for the New Year's Eve event cost £36, including a three-course dinner. Phone or visit the Harbour Café Bar to book.



Picture: MARTIN ELLIOTT

## ASHFORD LEISURE

### Talented acts line up to entertain in the lounge

ENJOY the break between Christmas and New Year at the Grey Lady Music Lounge in Tunbridge Wells.

The twice-weekly showcase of talent, Paul Dunton and Guests, will welcome Mechanical Sunrise, Henry Willard, Tehillah, Commission and headliners Hoath to the venue in The Pantiles on Sunday. The event starts at 7.30pm and tickets cost £4. For details see [www.myspace.com/paulduntonandguests](http://www.myspace.com/paulduntonandguests) or [www.thegreylady.co.uk](http://www.thegreylady.co.uk).

### See in the New Year at a fabulous VIP party

FEEL Full Length and Fabulous this New Year's Eve at the G Casino at Westwood Cross, Broadstairs.

The casino's party will offer VIP treatment to guests, who will be welcomed with champagne, a photo shoot, a magician, a live band and a disco. There will be a buffet and the chance to party into the New Year with an ABBA tribute show and late barbecue.

Tickets cost £50, with £5 from each going to the Pilgrim's Hospice. Phone 01843 579999, or see [www.gcasino.co.uk](http://www.gcasino.co.uk).

### New Year's Eve party is right up your street

NEW Year's Eve will be celebrated in style at the Orange Street Music Venue in Canterbury.

The act had yet to be confirmed at the time of writing, but there will be quality live music to help revellers usher in 2009. People can also expect good food, fine wine, champagne, drinks offers and good company to welcome the New Year. The party starts at 8pm – see [www.orangestreetmusic.com](http://www.orangestreetmusic.com).

### Fun for all the family at laughter pantomime

JOIN Simple Simon for some traditional fun in the family show Little Bo Peep: The Laughter Pantomime.

Presented by Gordon Clarkson, the show features a talented cast performing lots of song, dance and comedy with audience participation, too.

Little Bo Peep will provide festive fun for the family. The show will be at Westgate Pavilion, Westgate-on-Sea, from Boxing Day to December 28. Tickets cost £8/£4. Phone 01843 835611.

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 Jim Penfold and the Hollywood Killers with their track Hole In My Room.



 Music by KialKanjeng Indonesia from the album Terus Berjalan.



## Top five Kent gigs

1. D-FINITIVE - Space (from Tenterden)
2. Steve Furlong - To Fall With You (from Birchington)
3. Ron Bowdery - Strange Sights on Bluebell Hill (from New Eltham)
4. The Flack - Animal (from Deal)
5. Shelta - Daze & Nights (from Bexley)

■ BY SIMON ROBINSON

THE GOOD people at the Gulbenkian Theatre have put thoughts of Christmas over-indulgence aside to ensure the new year starts at pace.

The Canterbury theatre's arts team has resisted the temptation to join the rest of the working world in the annual pre-Christmas wind-down by lining up five nights of top music in January.

The month kicks off with jazz, moves on to 60s legends and finishes with Eastern drums.

There's more on the Gulbenkian's January programme below. For further details, visit [www.kent.ac.uk/gulbenkian](http://www.kent.ac.uk/gulbenkian).

### Monday, January 12 - Open Mic Jazz Singers' Night, 8pm.

Wannabe Louis Armstrongs and Nina Simones can take to the stage at the theatre's open mic night.

Tickets cost £4.90.

### Monday, January 19 - John Leyton, Craig Douglas and The Flames, 7.45pm

Sixties singing stars John Leyton and Craig Douglas will perform at the Kent University Rock'n'Roll Society gig, backed by The Flames.

Between them, John and Craig recorded massive hits which defined the era, enjoying chart success with hits such as Johnny Remember Me, Wild Wind and Only Sixteen.

Tickets £10, concessions £8.

### Saturday, January 24 - Paul Jones and Digby Fairweather, 7.45pm



The show features the dynamic new teaming of Paul Jones – 60s chart-topping star of Manfred Mann, the Manfreds and later his own Blues Band – and Digby Fairweather's Half Dozen, poll-winners of Marston's British Jazz Awards small group category 2005/6.

Tickets cost £20

### Wednesday, January 28 - Jazz @ 5, 5pm to 6pm

University students and staff musicians will perform jazz standards and vocal numbers at the Gulbenkian Café Bar, giving stressed-out students an ideal day to wind down.



**TASTY OFFERINGS:** Dulciori (left) and Paul Jones of Manfred Mann fame are just two of the musical treats to help ease you into the new year at Canterbury's Gulbenkian

The hour-long performance is free and open to all.

### Friday, January 30 - Dulciori, 7.45pm

Dulciori perform their Drums of Korea show on Friday, January 30, bringing the month's music to a close.

The band, whose name translates as 'heartbeat of the land', were formed in 1984 to preserve traditions and to promote the Korean traditional performing arts.

They will perform their Drums of Korea show, which has taken audiences across the country by storm. Tickets cost £15.

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Sensitive, shy and caring lady, 20, loves life and sunsets, beaches, country walks, romantic meals, cinema. WLTM handsome gent to find love with. Box 446323

### I LOVE FOOTBALL

Fun to be with blonde female, 25, 5ft2, loves football, going out and staying in, looking for a like-minded man to be my soulmate. Box 446494

### MAYBE MORE

Seeking fun, friend, maybe more. WLTM, fun man 25-30. I'm female, 26, brown/hair/blue eyes, average build. Box 445622

### ATTENTION! TALL WHITE GUY REQUIRED

Pretty black female, 32, tall, loves watching football, shopping, travel, seeking tall, white, loving male, 34-47, for LTR. Chatham. Box 437778

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[www.people2people.co.uk/kos.asp](http://www.people2people.co.uk/kos.asp)

### CHANGE OF SCENERY

31yr old bubbly, fun-loving female, like reading, cinema, looking for tall, dark and handsome male, GSOH, for happy times. Box 438057

### TAKE ME OUT

Single mum, 32, cuddly larger lady, 5ft8, dark brown hair, seeking someone to have fun, a dance, some drinks, fun and more with. Box 438941

### HORSES FOR COURSES...

Caring, loving, affectionate female, 30, 5ft2, blonde, likes walking, horse riding, animals, sees affectionate male, 30-40, for lasting, loving relationship. Box 384017

### CANTERBURY TALE

Single mum of 2, 32, WLTM someone kind, caring and considerate, for nights in/out and cinema. Ryan from Whitstable, please call again, leave contact details! Box 466670

### FUN-LOVING FEMALE

Attractive, 31, 5ft2, size 10, dark hair with blonde highlights, blonde, WLTM intelligent, professional, attractive guy, for a happy relationship. Tunbridge Wells. Box 308734

### FRiENDSHIP, MAYBE MORE

Social, genuine, honest, single mum, 36, 5ft6. I've got hazel eyes and dark hair and enjoy the cinema, meals out. WLTM sincere, attractive, genuine male. Box 446840

### TRY ME

Ashford based woman looking for an honest, friendly, caring and loving man. I have 2 kids and enjoy the usual things in life. Box 446898

### ON THE LOOKOUT FOR LOVE

37yr old female, 2 kids, slim, brown hair and eyes, 5ft2, looking for a caring, loving, honest and trusting male to be my someone special. Box 446552

### SEE THE DAY

Loving female, 36, 5ft4, brown hair, green eyes, likes socialising, staying in, seeks genuine male for friendship and more. Box 428666

### MEND A BROKEN HEART

Single mum, 37, fun-loving, been hurt in past, looking for nice, genuine guy for hopeful happiness - no time wasters! Box 908053

### MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

Good looking woman, 37, 5ft2, brown hair/eyes, 2 kids. Looking for new friends and hopefully someone special. Box 446039

### HAPPINESS, THE GREATEST FEAT...

Shy female, 40, 5ft9, blue eyes, short blonde hair, medium build, loves going out, wine and dining, holidays; seeking likewise gentle-man, to start fresh with someone new, easygoing and life-loving. Box 446102

### COME ON OVER

Divorced female, 40, likes fishing, swimming, walking and eating out, the usual! Seeking male for long-term/serious relationship. Box 438102

### AN AFRICAN DIAMOND

38yr old African girl, likes cooking, eating walking films and dancing, seeking a loving and caring boy for companionship and more. Box 446676

### DON'T PASS ME BY

Curve, single mum of 4, 38yrs old, Kent based, into most things, looking for friendship or possibly romance. Box 897983

### DON'T LET ME DOWN

Pretty, black female, 38, 5ft4, like football, socialising and cooking, looking for a loving and caring male 38-42, for a LTR. Box 446684

### LOVING, CARING & HONEST

38yr old female, enjoys smoking, likes walking, cinema, shopping, walks, loves films and all sorts, except cricket. Box 155275

### THIS IS FOR YOU

Medium build woman, 41, 5ft2, kind, caring, loving and tactile, GSOH, looking to meet a nice man for a LTR. Box 446890

### FUN AND ROMANCE

Attractive woman, 41, 5ft6, blonde hair/blue eyes, I'd like to meet a guy for romance and fun, I enjoy cinema, pubs, meals out. Box 447009

### CAN YOU HANDLE ME?

I'm a 42 year old professional lady, long dark hair, brown eyes, petite with a sweet smile, looking for friends to chill with, those who know? Box 884441

### BORN TO MAKE YOU HAPPY

Caring lovely lady, 42, genuine, short brown hair, lacks confidence! seeking loyal, genuine person, someone special to put the spark back into my life. Box 885761

### LET'S CLICK

WLTM a nice guy with a similar nature; I'm an outgoing woman, 42, with brown hair and green eyes. Tell me about you! Box 446847

### TRY IT ALIVE!

Attractive 38yr old female, dark brown hair, blue eyes, curly physique, likes days out, music, cinema, dancing, cycling, sees loving, fun male for friendship/relationship. Box 1901893

### BLONDE AMBITION

Bubbly, cuddly, blonde single mum, 38, 5ft6, likes cars, reading, pubs, cosy nights in, having a laugh, looking for that right male. Tunbridge Wells Box 446543

### ANIMAL LOVER?

Nurse, 37, 2 kids, 5ft8, blonde hair, blue eyes, likes the gym, cooking, swimming, salsa dancing, looking for a kind, caring, loyal male Box 431557

### ENTHUSIASM ENCOURAGED!

Lovingly big-busted lady, 39, medium build, 5ft5, lots of energy! likes the gym, reading, new experiences! seeking a nice man for potential exciting relationship! Box 446724

### COOK UP A STORM

Tunbridge Wells lady, brown hair/eyes, 38, I'm a teacher and love theatre, reading, writing, swimming, travel. Looking for like minded chap for happy times. Box 444923

### FUN, FRESH & ADVENTURE!

Separated brilliant blonde, 39, medium mum, 5ft7, likes swimming and house music. WLTM a kind and considerate tall white male with dark shoulder length hair. Box 445684

### ON THE LOOKOUT FOR LOVE

37yr old female, 2 kids, slim, brown hair and eyes, 5ft2, looking for a caring, loving, honest and trusting male to be my someone special. Box 446552

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### HONEST UPS

New to area, I'm a 47yr old chap, I ride a motorcycle and I'm looking for a good girl, I'm a bit of a ladies' man. Box 447110

### FRiENDSHIP FIRST

Loving, fun, outgoing guy, 48, 6ft3, medium build, blue eyes. Looking for a friend and maybe more, lets see! Box 447112

### WELL DRESSED CHAP

Attractive black male, 6ft, 48, fit and healthy, I like swimming, a social drink, WLTM white lady, Kent based, someone to fun with. Box 445523

### SEARCHING FOR LOVE

Genuine, friendly female, 40, likes sports, seeking female with great personality, honest and trustworthy. Box 446596

### THE BEST CHRISTMAS OF THEM ALL

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### Women seeking women

THAT'S ME Kind, loving, fun woman, passionate and friendly with a GSOH. Box 446519

### DIG DEEPER

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### FRIENDSHIP, MAYBE MORE

Curly hair female, 32, seeks like-minded female, for friendship, hopefully more. Single mum, work part time. Box 445275

### LAUGHTER, THE BEST MEDICINE

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### COMPANIONSHIP, LAUGHING LADY

Curly hair, blonde, 40, seeking a friendly female, 53, 5ft7, larger build, fair hair, likes socialising, country walks, theatre, cinema, music, swimming, WLTM similar loving male. Box 443642

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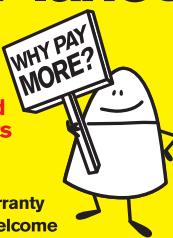
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**ASHFORD SHOPPING**

**Last-minute present buying's a close shave**

ANYONE searching for a last-minute Christmas present could give the gift of immaculate grooming with Remington.

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Men can save face with the PG410 Designer Stubble Kit (£29.99), which will help them maintain an effortless five o'clock shadow. Available from Boots and other leading retailers.

**Brush up on some great festive gifts for teeth**

HELP promote oral health and give your child a fun stocking-filler with a TePe Christmas toothbrush.

The festively-decorated toothbrushes are available in both child and adult sizes and help make brushing more fun.

With families looking forward to a feast of Christmas fare it is as important as ever to keep teeth clean and fresh.

Priced at just £1.49 and approved by the British Dental Health Foundation, TePe Christmas toothbrushes are available from dental practices and pharmacies.

**Don't miss out on last day to Select an outfit**

TODAY is the last day shoppers can take advantage of great savings at Select.

The ladies' clothes store at Westwood Cross in Thanet has been offering 50 per cent off selected partywear throughout December and 20 per cent off outerwear.

Hurry to the shopping centre today to avoid missing out on the last pre-Christmas discounts.

For details about events at Westwood Cross, see [www.westwoodx.co.uk](http://www.westwoodx.co.uk).

**Mediterranean luxury is yours for less in sale**

BUY luxury Italian home furnishings at discounted prices at Natuzzi's in House of Fraser, Maidstone.

The department – which can be found on the first floor of the Fremlin Walk store – is offering 20 per cent off all full-price items until January 31, so do not miss the chance to start the New Year with some fabulous new furnishings for your home.

Terms and conditions apply. For details of other events at Fremlin Walk, see [www.fremlinwalk.co.uk](http://www.fremlinwalk.co.uk).

**Winter wonderland to go on after Christmas**

BARGAIN-hunters can still enjoy festive fun at Bluewater even when Christmas Day has passed.

The centre's Winter Wonderland offers plenty of entertainment for visitors of all ages, from the ice rink and live performances on the bandstand to cooking demonstrations at the Ice Palace.

Winter Wonderland, which was opened by former Spice Girl Geri Halliwell, will run until Saturday, January 3.

For more information, visit the website at [www.bluewater.co.uk](http://www.bluewater.co.uk).

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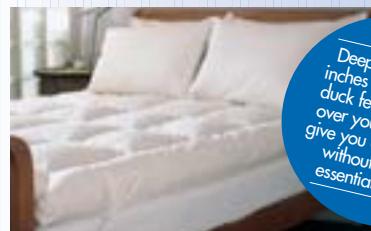
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## YOUR TV REVIEW

 **DOCTOR WHO**  
BBC One, 6pm, Christmas Day  
■ BY TOM BETTS

WHAT better way to celebrate the fact that your stomach is groaning under the weight of too much festive gorging than with an evening in front of the box on Christmas Day?

While some families like to play charades or talk to each other, most sensible people decline any of that nonsense and prefer to zone out and ignore everyone else for as long as possible. I call these wise souls, 'my kind of people'.

This scenario is what a show like Doctor Who was made for and the Christmas installment, The Next Doctor, should keep you entertained for a time as the inevitable inter-familial bickering begins.

The Christmas show may not even throw up the answer to the big question at all, (that being, who will be the next incarnation of the Doctor?), but at least we should all tune in to see just who may fill David Tennant's size nines.

Last year's effort, with Kylie Minogue and a giant flying spaceship called the Titanic was very disappointing and not of the quality now expected for the BBC's standard-bearing Christmas show, a mantle once carried by EastEnders – even if that now seems odd.

Those stomping party-poopers the Cybermen are back for this year's adventure and are sure to be wreaking havoc in a were-not-quite-as-good-as-the-Daleks style.

But most of all, it is just who will be. Who that will fascinate most.

David Tennant has been a huge hit with the masses, and in particular



**WHO'S WHO?** Christmas is the time to tune in and see who will take over from David Tennant

younger fans, but among much of the hardcore fan base he is seen as too lightweight or not quirky enough to be thought of as a classic Doctor.

David Morrissey, who has been cropping up in the trailers to the episode, is hot favourite to take on the role, but surely that would be a little too obvious.

You would hope that the creators will want to pull off a surprise and will have kept the character's next face under wraps.

Other contenders include Little Britain's David Walliams, Cold Feet's Jimmy Nesbitt and John Simm, who appeared before as the hero's nemesis, The Master.

Paterson Joseph, star of Peep Show could become the first black actor to take on the role or maybe Jennifer Saunders will become the first female of time travel.

Whoever does end up occupying the Tardis the transformation will be one of the most memorable television moments of the year, and it's much better than talking and stuff.

## YOUR WEEK'S HOROSCOPE

BY RUSSELL GRANT



### AQUARIUS (Jan 21-Feb 19)

RETREATING to a quiet, private place puts you back in touch with your true essence. Recently, your identity has been wrapped up in your social circle. Now you're starting to realise there are differences between you and your friends. For one thing, you're more visionary.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Aquarius** 09067-531762

### TAURUS (Apr 21-May 21)

EVEN though you're a creature of habit, you aren't immune to adventure. If you feel you're in a rut this is a great time to make a huge transformation. Travelling abroad will be wonderfully enriching. This journey could put you on the path of romance.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Taurus** 09067-531753

### LEO (Jul 24-Aug 23)

THIS week is wonderful for embarking on a whole new routine. Improving your diet and launching an exercise routine will both pay off handsomely. If your job has been jeopardising your health, you need to find another situation. A new position could fall in your lap.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Leo** 09067-531756

### SCORPIO (Oct 24-Nov 22)

WHETHER you know it or not, your words have tremendous power so watch what you say. Get into the habit of offering constructive criticisms and optimistic forecasts. Although it's not in your nature to view the glass as half full, you can overcome this tendency.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Scorpio** 09067-531759

### PISCES (Feb 20-Mar 20)

BE mindful of the company you keep. If you've been hanging around a bunch of pessimists, their attitude will cloud your thinking. When left to your own devices, your true spirit will shine through. Soon, you'll start attracting the sort of people who enjoy your optimism.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Pisces** 09067-531763

### GEMINI (May 22-Jun 22)

A POSSIBLE affair with someone sexy causes you to see yourself in a whole new light. You may be inspired to undergo an elaborate program of self improvement. What once seemed to be an inevitable arrangement now looks like a personal choice.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Gemini** 09067-531754

### VIRGO (Aug 24-Sep 23)

YOU've always prided yourself on being a practical, responsible person, but now you're starting to suspect you've been missing out on life. Once you get an initial adrenaline rush, you'll become more daring. Friends and family will be surprised as you yearn for adventure.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Virgo** 09067-531757

### SAGITTARIUS (Nov 23-Dec 21)

HAVING a secret stash of cash may appeal to you. Conventional wisdom says that having a year's worth of salary tucked into savings can prove liberating. You'll be much less prone to stay in a troubled relationship or stick with a terrible job if you have the means to strike out.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Sagittarius** 09067-531760

Calls cost 75p per minute. Service provided by g8wave London N7

### ARIES (Mar 21-Apr 19)

You're starting to wonder whether you're on the right career path. Changing track will be difficult, but worthwhile. You've been blessed with an entrepreneurial spirit. Starting your own business is a distinct possibility. Explore opportunities related to investments or construction.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Aries** 09067-531752

### CANCER (Jun 23-Jul 23)

YOU may feel drawn to an intellectual or studious person with an air of mystery. If you're already in a relationship, you'll need to think things through thoroughly before you make any decisions. Finding out what makes each other tick can greatly improve your relationship.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Cancer** 09067-531755

### LIBRA (Sep 24-Oct 23)

LAUNCHING a home renovation will be stressful, but rewarding. A sensitive creature like you can't handle all of that sawing, hammering, and dust. Search for a temporary resting place in a quiet, secluded neighbourhood. This will give you a chance to explore your emotions.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Libra** 09067-531758

### CAPRICORN (Dec 22-Jan 20)

FACING your deepest fear is scary, but empowering. Status has always been very important to you. Without it, you've always worried that people won't respect you. Actually, the truth is different. People love you for who you are, not what you do.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Capricorn** 09067-531761

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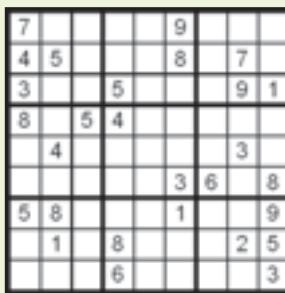
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No68

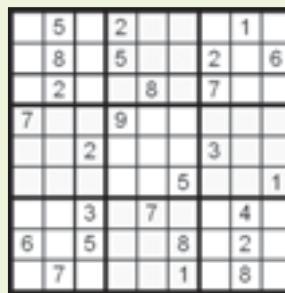
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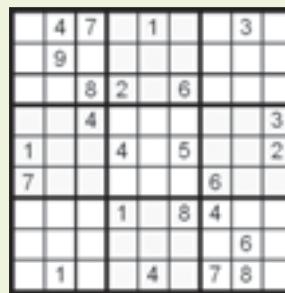
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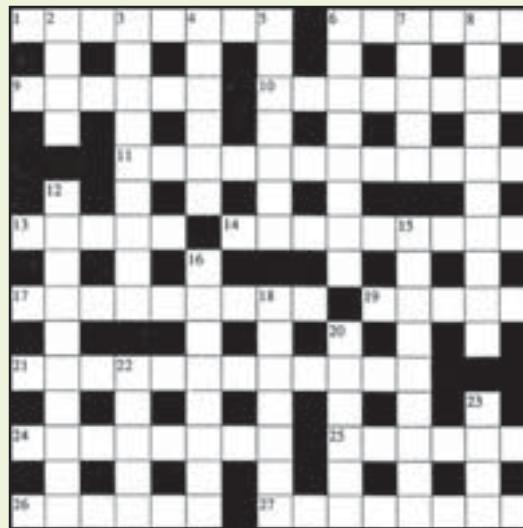


### CRYPTIC CLUES

ACROSS

- 1 Hot stuff with aspic cooked inside (8)
- 6 Bet Sid converted flat (6)
- 9 Hooligan Virginia destroyed land (6)
- 10 Floor covering, sort used by printers (8)
- 11 Not being enterprising having a house on the pavement (7.5)
- 13 Theatre-in-the-round (5)
- 14 Corner wriggler used as bait (9)
- 17 Replace catalogue - clot! (9)
- 19 Earthen pot obtained during said sea-trip (5)
- 21 Knowing enough to be reassured by the doctor? (4-8)
- 24 He quips about trapping youth leader with bodily development (8)
- 25 Means of removing hard water from windscreen perhaps (2-4)
- 26 Contort becoming whiter (6)
- 27 Oddly in a rough way (8)
- DOWN
- 2 Jack's reportedly following a Dutch football team (4)
- 3 Catch seat first on part of bicycle (9)
- 4 Accountant left one company cotton cloth (6)
- 5 Plant, one taking on large number (7)
- 6 Lying Ben removed graciously and in a kindly way (8)
- 7 Some trade terms used are enough to put one off (5)
- 8 Deprive little devil taking on his version (10)
- 12 Nearly all to catch the girl completely (10)
- 15 Web found everything in broad earth (9)
- 16 150 I name I question going to eastern hospital (8)
- 18 US author found the gold hidden with more gold (7)
- 20 Smear some of this mud generally in (6)
- 22 Is last character taken in by officer or composer? (5)
- 23 Ringing laughter (4)

SCRIBBLE HERE



### QUICK CLUES

ACROSS

- 1 Fourth part (8)
- 6 Dropped (6)
- 9 Snuffle (6)
- 10 Fashion shop (8)
- 11 Rowdy frolic (6-6)
- 13 Experience (5)
- 14 Male wedding attendants (9)
- 17 I wondered (anag.) (9)
- 19 Devastate (5)
- 21 Myopic (5-7)
- 24 Caribou (8)
- 25 Stumble (6)
- 26 Pointed writing instrument (6)
- 27 Dire (8)

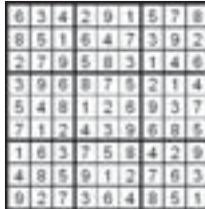
DOWN

- 2 Bone in arm (4)
- 3 Do something (anag.) (5.4)
- 4 On fire (6)
- 5 Cylindrical (7)
- 6 Resonating chamber (8)
- 7 Showiness (5)
- 8 Cheerful enthusiasm (10)
- 12 Ornamentation (10)
- 15 Stood across (9)
- 16 Greek hero (8)
- 18 Had a bet (7)
- 20 Itself (anag.) (6)
- 22 Of the kidneys (5)
- 23 Lima's country (4)

## LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS

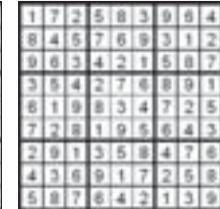
### SUDOKU SOLUTIONS No67

EASY



MEDIUM

HARD



Answers to all of this week's quizzes can be found on our website

### CRYPTIC SOLUTION No67

ACROSS: 1 Slavery 5 Ogreish 9 Ivor 10 Swan around 12 Strike up 13 Grease 14 Relief worker 17 Presentiment 21 Inform 23 Biarritz 24 Buttoned-up 25 Ashy 26 All told 27 Jetting. DOWN: 2 Leivity 3 Verdigris 4 Russell 6 Glasgow 7 Evoke 8 Sinister 11 Apple-pie bed 15 Retardant 16 Tranquill 18 Nominal 19 Example 20 Itchen 22 Octet.

### QUICK SOLUTION No68

STRIKE 22 RETARDANT 27 ASHY 26 LEIVITY 3 VERDIGRIS 4 RUSSELL 6 GLASGOW 7 EVOKE 8 SINISTER 11 APPLEPIE 15 RETARDANT 16 TRANQUILL 18 NOMINAL 19 EXAMPLE 20 ITCHEN 22 OCTET. DIRTBLASTER LANCE - 50% more power for the most stubborn dirt. EXTRA LARGE WASH BRUSH for cleaning cars, caravans, windows and garden furniture. CLEANING TABLETS that make 5 Litres of Universal Cleaning Detergent.

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A love story with a dangerous twist. When school outcast Bella moves to live with her father, she doesn't expect to fall in love with Edward, an intelligent, witty yet mysterious local. Edward is not your average teenager, he's super-strong and super-fast, but he's not a super-hero, he's a vampire.

THE TALE OF DESPEREAUX (U)



The once joyous kingdom of Dor has become a miserable place. Despereaux Tilling, a tiny mouse with big ideas, teams up with fellow outcast Roscuro the rat and sets out on a journey to change things for the better in this animated hit.

INKHEART (PG)



Meggie's father has the ability to bring to life characters from books that he reads to her at night. But when an evil villain kidnaps Meggie's father to bring other evil villains from books to life, it's down to Meggie and her friends to do things she has only ever read about and save the planet from true evil.

# Join Danny and say yes

■ BY HANNAH STEPHENSON

WHAT happens to a man who says 'yes' to everything?

In short, he becomes a best-selling author, finds the girl of his dreams, carves a career as a TV presenter and ends up on a Hollywood set with Jim Carrey.

This is what has happened to Danny Wallace, author of Yes Man, first published in 2005 but now repackaged in time for the release on Boxing Day of the film of the same name, starring Jim Carrey in the title role.

Even now, Dundee-born Danny, 32, about to embark on a promotional tour in America with Carrey, finds this whole episode of his life quite surreal and has included a new chapter at the end of the latest edition of Yes Man about all of his experiences in Hollywood.

"Hollywood was great. I got to go on the set and meet all the people. It was surreal turning up and seeing a chair with your name on it," he says.

"It was made from book to film very quickly. It was amazing seeing it gradually become this bigger, all-American thing."

Meeting Jim Carrey was also great, he enthuses.

"There he was on the screen and when he left the screen he was suddenly by your side, which didn't seem to make any sense."

"From the moment he appeared, I was chatting away with him and it suddenly seemed very normal."

"Then part of your brain just goes 'Hang on, that's Jim Carrey!' and you must try not to give that away."

"We talked about very normal stuff, like what he'd watched on TV, but what is extraordinary is when the cameras are on and he turns into Jim Carrey the film star. He throws himself into it."

In one scene Carrey had to turn around and knock someone's drink over, Danny recalls.

"I watched him do the scene four or five times because he wasn't happy with it. He did something quite special and pulled off a classic Jim Carrey moment, which ended up with him fracturing a couple of his ribs."

"The next time I saw him walking by he had an ice pack and I said 'It was worth it, though' and he agreed it was totally worth it."

The original idea for Yes Man came from



**AFFIRMATIVE:** Danny Wallace has gone from being Dave Gorman's hapless sidekick to an internationally-known writer and presenter, all because he said yes

be watching The Weakest Link. It was a habit I had to get out of.

"Someone said to me 'You should say 'yes' more and it struck a chord. That was the best thing in the world. It means you take a chance, grab an opportunity. If you say 'yes', everything can change. If you say 'no', nothing ever changes."

Today, he is still saying 'yes' more than he used to, he reflects.

"I'll end up going across town to see a very odd-named band who I would never in a million years have wanted to see and will probably never see again, but you're as likely to meet the love of your life at a bad party as at a good one."

"That's a good way to live your life. Excitement can be just around the corner, hiding in the littlest things."

## VIEW THIS PREVIEW

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Danny's own negative attitude, he admits. "I was saying 'no' a lot and staying in a lot. I was quite happy just to watch TV."

"My friends would ask me out and I'd say 'I can't, I'm doing something...' and it would just



**YES MAN**  
Certificate 12A

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**January & February 09**



The Gulbenkian would like to wish all our cinema-goers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

The Gulbenkian Cinema will reopen on Monday 5 January with many exciting films including *Blindness*, from the director of *City of God*, *Changeling*, *Clint Eastwood's latest* – as director, *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* – the latest from *Woody Allen*, starring *Penélope Cruz*, *Slumdog Millionaire* and many more...

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## Amazing Azores' hidden gems

BY KATE WHITING

THE Azores are politically part of Europe but, marooned in the middle of the Atlantic, culturally and geographically this Portuguese outpost could hardly be farther away.

On this verdant archipelago of nine volcanic islands with its own pace of life, far removed from the bustling cities of continental Europe, visitors are advised to leave their expectations on the plane, "slow down, relax and adapt" to the Azorean way of doing things.

It's sensible advice. This is hardly a destination for beach-bums, although the islands muster a few beaches between them, mostly of black sand. But the lush flora is stunning and walkers keen to get away from it all are in seventh heaven.

The year-round mild climate has temperatures hitting a balmy 24 degrees in August. In this friendly, relaxed and fascinating place, you can explore natural lakes and spas and try some great restaurants in between.

We began with a walking tour of Ponta Delgada, the main city on the largest island of Sao Miguel. Like many towns in the Azores, it was built from the most common rock on the archipelago – basalt.

In the market we learned how to tell when locally-grown pineapple is ripe – from the size of its scales – and tried a delicious Azorean delicacy, bananas with local cheese.

From a lookout at the top of the market, the



**TRANQUIL:** Sao Lourenco Bay on the small island of Santa Maria (above) and the view over Ponta Delgada (right)

view across the terracotta-tiled roof-tops of Ponta Delgada is interspersed with a couple of high-rise concrete constructions, apparently apartments for tourists.

In the afternoon, my partner and I wandered down to the modern marina for a whale-watching trip.

Our base was the Hotel do Colegio, a beautiful old music college in the centre of town, with basalt arches and a central courtyard with a swimming pool.

Next morning, an internal flight whisked us to nearby Santa Maria. At 37 square miles, it is one of the smallest islands of the archipelago, but the first to be discovered in the 1400s.

Each village in Santa Maria has a colour scheme. Simple, bungalow-style houses are all painted white, with a different-coloured border

around the doors and outer edges of the walls, depending on which village they belong to.

Pico Alto is the highest point at 590 metres, offering a stunning 360-degree view of the island. From here we could see the massive contrast between the hilly, forested south-west and the flat, fertile north-east.

Our visit to the Azores ended with one of its biggest highlights – a Geofun tour, guided by Pedro, a Portuguese-born geologist at Ponta Delgada's visitor centre, who whisked us into the hills in his shiny jeep.

His superb English and deep knowledge of the island made the day a great adventure.

Flying home, we knew we had barely scratched the surface of the Azores.

There are so many more islands to explore, you don't have to make an excuse to go back.

### FACT FILE:

|                 |                         |
|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Time difference | UK -1hr                 |
| Language        | Portuguese              |
| Capital         | Ponta Delgada           |
| Population      | 243000                  |
| Religion        | Roman Catholic          |
| Climate         | Temperate               |
| Currency        | Euro (1.2 to £1 approx) |

### Travel details

Kate Whiting was a guest of Sunvil Discovery, which offers short-break, tailor-made, multi-centre and fly-drive packages to nine islands of the Azores. • Three nights' bed and breakfast at Hotel do Colegio on Sao Miguel starts at £542 in August, including flights ex-Gatwick and transfers.

• Half-day whale-watching tour costs £38 from Ponta Delgada; full-day geological tour costs £52.

• Sunvil's 14-night grand tour of six islands (Sao Miguel, Santa Maria, Faial, Pico, Sao Jorge and Terceira) starts at £1513, including flights, transfers, bed-and-breakfast accommodation, some entry tickets and guided excursions.

• Sunvil reservations: 0208 758 4722 and [www.sunvil.co.uk](http://www.sunvil.co.uk).



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## MOTORS NEWS



### Drop in VAT means 500 is now a bargain buy

FIAT'S 500 which has caused a storm in the showroom can now be put on the road for under £8,000. Dealers, and buyers, have the Chancellor to thank after the reduction in VAT.

The 1.2-litre 500 Pop price had crept up to £8,100 during the summer but now you can get one on the road for £7,929.

With dealers offering spectacular finance deals and every one of them looking to win your business, don't forget to ask for a few extras as well.

In November, car sales in the UK fell 36.8 per cent to 100,333 units compared with the same month last year.



### New eco-friendly cars 'show' the way forward

MERCEDES has unveiled three new environmentally-friendly 'show' cars.

Called BlueZero – to suggest 'blue skies and zero emissions' – the Mercedes concepts are to include an electric car and a concept powered by a hydrogen fuel cell.

Outside the 'green' bodywork is identical for all three prototypes.

All feature transparent cladding for the rear wheels to reduce resistance.

All the eco cars on show in America use the platform of the next-generation Mercedes B-class compact. The new B-class is to go on sale in Europe in 2012.

### Hamilton's got it licked over on the Isle of Man

BRITISH F1 ace Lewis Hamilton is to feature on a series of stamps in the Isle of Man.

They'll cost – well, they'll cost about the price of a stamp and will be released on January 15.

The IOM has beaten the Royal Mail which revealed it was considering a set of commemorative stamps featuring the McLaren driver.

It has been reported the Royal Mail's new stamp will be released early next year and they will serve as an accolade for the youngest driver to ever win the World Championship.

It would be a break with tradition for the Royal Mail which has already released its 2009 stamp schedule and has a policy of not featuring living non-royalty on stamps unless they are part of a larger group.



STYLISH: Volkswagen's dramatically styled Scirocco is a decent four-seater, a terrific drive and looks good value compared to its rivals priced at £20,940 for the standard trim

# New Scirocco wards off chill of recession

## ROAD TEST

### VW SCIROCCO

■ BY STEVE LOADER

#### STAR QUALITY

|                |       |
|----------------|-------|
| Driving appeal | ★★★★★ |
| Image          | ★★★★★ |
| Space          | ★★★★★ |
| Value          | ★★★★★ |
| Running costs  | ★★★★★ |
| Reliability    | ★★★★★ |
| Green rating   | ★★★★★ |

ed approach; the new Scirocco range features VW's Adaptive Chassis Control system (ACC) as standard so this already versatile car can match all moods and situations.

'Normal' is the all-rounder and 'Comfort' is great for long distances, but 'Sport' soon became my default, because it shows the car's tautness and flat cornering to effect without punishing driver and occupants.

The cabin shows less design input than for the muscular exterior, but it is a neat and well-arranged job using robust quality materials and there is plenty of room in the back.

You could crib about the high rear window line and lowered headroom, but if they are deal breakers then check out the Golf GTI instead.

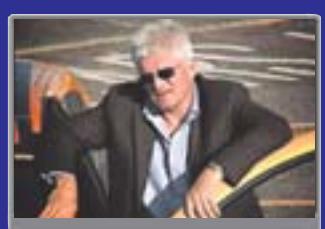
I take similar issue with whinges about the Scirocco's boot; it is massive for this type of car and entirely in keeping with the dynasty's mix of sportiness and practicality yet you hear moans like "the loading lip's too high", "it's not that big" – what do people expect from a coupé that handles like a dream, seats four properly and costs much less than upmarket rivals?

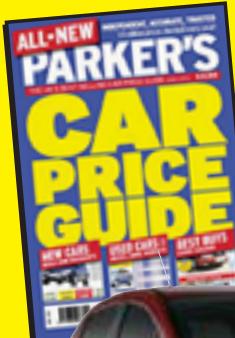
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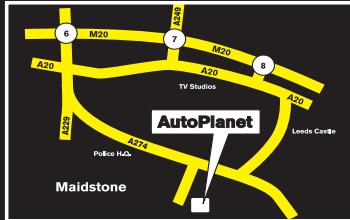
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## USED CAR ROUND-UP: OUR PICK FROM A KEY SECTOR

### POPULAR SUPERMINIS

As more people downsize their car and their fuel and road tax bills, chances are that one or all of the following popular used superminis will be on their shopping list. Year in, year out they are the UK's most consistent best-sellers – a trend expected to become even firmer in the current economic climate. A word of warning though; as second-hand prices harden, make sure you don't pay more than it would cost to keep your old car longer or even make you think about a new car.

#### FORD FIESTA



FORD'S hugely successful supermini marches on with a new model just out, but don't expect weaker used prices for older versions. Volatile fuel costs, draconian road taxes and fears of a recession have made the Fiesta a top target for its reliability, decent driving experience, engines to suit all pockets and three and five-door body styles. Ford has also regularly produced special and limited editions, but watch that you don't pay more for extra goodies, especially when largely cosmetic.

#### STAR QUALITY

|                 |       |
|-----------------|-------|
| Driving appeal  | ★★★★★ |
| Looks and image | ★★★★★ |
| Space           | ★★★★★ |
| Value           | ★★★★★ |
| Running costs   | ★★★★★ |
| Reliability     | ★★★★★ |
| Quality         | ★★★★★ |

#### VAUXHALL CORSA



VAUXHALL'S Corsa was created to attack the Ford Fiesta head on, yet has never quite achieved the volumes of its rival. Nevertheless, it offers the same virtues, plus a greater range of engines including a punchy and frugal, if a little buzzy, three-cylinder petrol engine now in greater demand due to these straitened times. Several generations of Corsa followed a 'teardrop' body style, but the latest car is bigger and more aggressively sculpted – almost a 'supersize supermini'.

#### STAR QUALITY

|                 |       |
|-----------------|-------|
| Driving appeal  | ★★★★★ |
| Looks and image | ★★★★★ |
| Space           | ★★★★★ |
| Value           | ★★★★★ |
| Running costs   | ★★★★★ |
| Reliability     | ★★★★★ |
| Quality         | ★★★★★ |

#### RENAULT CLIO



DOWNSIZING can be sensible and chic with the Clio and the most recent generations have married durability and driving fun with Gallic charm. Again, the option of three or five doors is a big selling point, but our French contender also has the bonus of excellent diesel versions, though the cost of the actual fuel versus petrol argues against it currently. The Clio design has tended to be highly practical as well as charming, with good space for rear passengers.

#### STAR QUALITY

|                 |       |
|-----------------|-------|
| Driving appeal  | ★★★★★ |
| Looks and image | ★★★★★ |
| Space           | ★★★★★ |
| Value           | ★★★★★ |
| Running costs   | ★★★★★ |
| Reliability     | ★★★★★ |
| Quality         | ★★★★★ |

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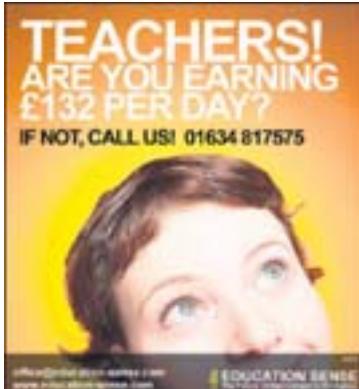
required for busy doctor's surgery to cover 2 evenings and 3 mornings. Must be flexible, keyboard skills an advantage but not essential.

Please apply in writing with CV to  
 Mrs Jill Blackman, Practice Manager, Sun Lane Surgery, 5 Sun Lane, Hythe, Kent CT21 5JX

Nicholas James Care Homes Ltd,  
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Sheppey College is a satellite of Canterbury College and has been open since 1996. We offer a variety of courses in a modern and friendly learning environment and enjoy excellent rates of success.

Supply Learning Support staff required in the following areas: Ref SH/L/S

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- Skills for Working Life
- ICT
- Hair
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- Public Services
- Cache
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- Construction

Various hours available, salary starting £16,914 pro rata per annum

For an information pack please visit [www.canterburycollege.ac.uk](http://www.canterburycollege.ac.uk) or call the Human Resources Office on 01227 811282 (24 hr answerphone) quoting the above reference.

Staff benefits include:

- Pension & Life Assurance Scheme
- Proximity to main bus & train stations
- Generous Holiday Allowance
- Close to Town Centre

The closing date for the above posts is Monday 12th January 2009 at 12 noon.

 **CLICK**  
[www.canterburycollege.ac.uk/job-vacancies](http://www.canterburycollege.ac.uk/job-vacancies)

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 C o l l e g e



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**Canterbury**  
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Canterbury College is a Further and Higher Education College in the heart of Kent. Our goal is to be one of the best FE Colleges in England by 2010. We have 9,000 students across 300 courses and enjoy an enviable reputation as a great place to learn. Our brand new £50M campus is also home to nearly 800 staff and we have some great career opportunities which may be right for you.

**Section Manager Construction Craft**

08/12

37 hrs per week, salary starting £33,858 per annum

**Section Manager Dental Nursing, Social Care and Counselling**

06/110

37 hrs per week, salary starting £33,858 per annum

**Coordinator Mathematics**

08/61

37 hrs per week, salary starting £27,209 per annum

**Lecturer Media in Interactive Media**

04/64

18.5 hrs per week salary range £18,387 – £26,363 pro rata per annum

**Pre 16 Tutor**

07/12

37 hrs per week salary range £18,387 – £26,363 per annum

Fixed term post ending 31 August 2010

**Lecturer Computing and IT**

L24

37 hrs per week salary range £18,387 – £26,363 per annum.

Fixed term post ending 31 December 2012

**Lecturer Public Services**

06/92 & 08/145

2 x posts - 37 hrs per week salary range £18,387 – £26,363 per annum.

**Supply Lecturers to teach Learning Support and Teaching Assistants**

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Various hours available, salary range £18,387 – £26,363 pro rata per annum

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08/154

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*For an information pack please visit [www.canterburycollege.ac.uk](http://www.canterburycollege.ac.uk) or call the Human Resources Office on 01227 811282 (24 hr answerphone) quoting the above reference.*

Staff benefits include:

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 **CLICK**  
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MidKent College based in the Medway Towns and Maidstone is seeking to appoint outstanding individuals in the following areas:

#### Electrical Maintenance Technician

Salary: £15,057 - £18,534

The successful candidate will assist the Maintenance Manager in the maintenance and repair of electrical systems and carry-out testing, servicing and minor works, including replacement of electrical installations, fire and lighting systems. The applicant will be a qualified electrician and conversant with the 16th and/or 17th Edition Wiring Regulations.

Ref: P0070

#### Lecturer in Travel & Tourism

(Part-time 33 hours per week) Salary: £25,092 - £28,719 pro-rata

An opportunity has arisen for a Lecturer in Travel & Tourism. The main purpose of the role is to deliver and teach on a range of Travel and Tourism courses. You must have a relevant degree, ideally in Tourism and will have or be willing to work towards an appropriate teaching qualification within a specified timeframe.

Ref: P0543

#### Lecturer in Plumbing

Salary: £25,092 - £32,898 (depending on skills and experience)

The ideal candidate will have current knowledge and experience of the Building Services Industry and have a relevant trade qualification in plumbing. The successful candidate will have or be willing to work towards a recognised teaching qualification.

Ref: P0231

#### Hourly Paid Lecturer in Sport

£19.74 to £28.28 per hour including holiday component

We are looking to recruit an hourly paid Lecturer for Sport to prepare, deliver, assess and teach on a range of courses, including BTEC National in Sports Science. The applicant will have a Sports Science or Sports related degree and be able to coach on a range of sporting activities.

Ref: SES01

#### Hourly Paid Lecturers/Reviewing Officer/Assessors

£19.74 to £28.28 per hour including holiday component

We are looking to recruit hourly paid Gas Trainers, Gas Assessors and Reviewing Officers/Assessors for Engineering and Welding and Lecturers in Plumbing and Mechanical Engineering. The successful candidates will have current knowledge and experience in their specialist field and a relevant trade qualification.

Ref: SES02

#### Aim-Higher Co-ordinator

(Maternity Cover - 30 hours per week, term-time) Salary: £17,861 - £22,907 pro-rata

The successful candidate will arrange, develop and deliver activities which will increase aspiration and awareness of opportunities in Higher Education and progression routes amongst learners currently enrolled at MidKent College and to lead in the support offered to learners with their applications into HE through the UCAS process.

Ref: MPR01

Closing date: Friday, 16 January 2009

Mid-Kent College is working in partnership with RBLI Employment Solutions to support individuals who have a disability or health condition in the application, interview and employment with the college. If you would like any further information regarding RBLI, or require assistance with your application process then please contact RBLI on 0800 783 1144 or visit their website [www.rbli.co.uk](http://www.rbli.co.uk) for information, advice and guidance.

The College is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young people and vulnerable adults and anyone applying for work with the College is expected to share this commitment. Any offer of employment is subject to an Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure.

Application forms and further details are available from [www.midkent.ac.uk](http://www.midkent.ac.uk). Alternatively, please e-mail [job.applications@midkent.ac.uk](mailto:job.applications@midkent.ac.uk). For individuals without access to e-mail or the internet please call the Personnel department on 01634 884402 (24 hour answer machine). In all communication with the College please quote the appropriate job title and reference number.

Mid-Kent College is an equal opportunities employer



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#### Folkestone, Marlowe and Spires Academies Clerk to the Governors/Project Officer

*Are you a good organiser, able to bring people together and make things happen?  
Do you enjoy the challenge of finding out new information and compiling interesting and relevant reports?*

*Would you like to be at the cutting edge of educational change?*

We are looking for someone who can combine the role of Clerk to the Governors for our three academies with a project officer role in supporting the development of our all age academy programme. This is the ideal job for an agile minded individual who enjoys the challenge of a varied range of responsibilities, working as part of a small Folkestone-based team.

Based in Folkestone Academy, you will be expected to travel to Canterbury and Ramsgate and be ready to adapt to a range of tasks.

- Start date: February or March 2009
- Salary £24,000 pa + benefits

For an informal discussion please contact Gabrielle Wilson on 01303 212048  
Application packs can be obtained from [www.folkestoneacademy.com](http://www.folkestoneacademy.com)

Closing date for applications: 9th January 2009



## C A R E E R S I N H E A L T H C A R E A C R O S S E A S T K E N T



### Your Skills Our Vision

From Sheerness to Dungeness, Ashford to Ramsgate, over 710,000 people depend on Eastern and Coastal Kent NHS – and we put them at the heart of everything we do. All our staff work hard every day to improve health and well-being for the local community, to tackle health inequalities and to provide high quality, responsive and efficient services, both directly and through commissioning.

As one of Kent's largest employers, we aim to employ and train a world-class workforce capable of meeting our many challenges. In return for your skills and commitment we offer wide-ranging staff benefits including real investment in personalised career development, flexible working, childcare, final salary pension scheme and in-house discounts.

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Eastern and Coastal Kent

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#### SELECTION OF CURRENT OPPORTUNITIES

##### ADMIN AND CLERICAL / DOMESTIC SERVICES

###### Administrative Assistant

Salary: £12,922 to £15,950 pa  
Band: 2  
Hours: 25  
Location: Sheppey Community Hospital  
Ref: 767-EIC711  
Closing date: 26/12/08

###### Lifelong Learning Advisor

Salary: £24,103 to £32,653 pa  
Band: 6  
Hours: 37.5  
Location: Ashford  
Ref: 767-ECC495  
Closing date: 02/01/09

###### Team Secretary

Salary: £14,834 - £17,732 pa  
Band: 3  
Hours: 20  
Location: Dover  
Ref: 767-ECC696  
Closing date: 07/01/09

##### NURSING AND MIDWIFERY REGISTERED

###### Tissue Viability Nurse X 2

Salary: £37,106 - £44,527 pa  
Band: 8a  
Hours: 37.5  
Location: Folkestone  
Ref: 767-EIC698  
Closing date: 29/12/08

##### Stroke Specialist Nurse X 2

Salary: £29,091 to £38,352 pa  
Band: 7  
Hours: 37.5  
Location: Whitstable  
Ref: 767-EIC699  
Closing date: 29/12/08

###### Community Children's Nurse

Salary: £24,103 to £32,653 pa  
Band: 6  
Hours: 37.5  
Location: Children's Assessment Centre, Kent & Canterbury Hospital  
Ref: 767-ECC655  
Closing date: 31/12/08

###### Community Children's Nurse - Clinical Deputy

Salary: £37,106 to £44,527 pa  
Band: 8a  
Hours: 37.5  
Location: Children's Assessment Centre, Kent & Canterbury Hospital  
Ref: 767-ECC656  
Closing date: 31/12/08

###### Staff Nurse

Salary: £20,225 - £26,123 pa  
Band: 5  
Hours: 37.5  
Location: Whitstable & Tankerton Hospital  
Ref: 767-EIC710  
Closing date: 04/01/09

###### Public Health Screening Nurse x 2

Salary: £24,103 - £32,653 pa  
Band: 6  
Hours: 22.5  
Location: Dover  
Ref: 767-ECC688  
Closing date: 05/01/09

##### ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

###### Health Promotion Practitioner

Salary: £20,225 to £26,123 pa  
Band: 5  
Hours: 37.5  
Location: Whitfield Court, Dover  
Ref: 767-ECC690  
Closing date: 31/12/08

###### Health Promotion Practitioner

Salary: £20,225 to £26,123 pa  
Band: 5  
Hours: 37.5  
Location: Whitfield Court, Dover  
Ref: 767-ECC691  
Closing date: 31/12/08

###### Occupational Therapist

Salary: £20,225 to £26,123 pa  
Band: 5  
Hours: 37.5  
Location: Cairn Ryan, Dover  
Ref: 767-ASH245  
Closing date: 05/01/09

##### ADDITIONAL CLINICAL SERVICES

###### Health Visitor

Salary: £24,103 to £32,653 pa  
Band: 6  
Hours: 37.5  
Location: Queen Victoria Memorial Hospital, Herne Bay  
Ref: 767-ECC721  
Closing date: 02/01/09

###### Health Visitor

Salary: £24,103 to £32,653 pa  
Band: 6  
Hours: 37.5  
Location: Swale, Kent  
Ref: 767-ECC713  
Closing date: 02/01/09

###### Health Visitor

Salary: £24,103 to £32,653 pa  
Band: 6  
Hours: 37.5  
Location: Whitstable Health Centre  
Ref: 767-ECC722  
Closing date: 02/01/09

###### Health Visitor

Salary: £24,103 to £32,653 pa  
Band: 6  
Hours: 30  
Location: Ramsgate, Kent  
Ref: 767-ECC720  
Closing date: 02/01/09

###### Healthcare Assistant

Salary: £14,834 - £17,732 pa  
Band: 3  
Hours: 18  
Location: Various Sites across East Kent  
Ref: 767-EIC707  
Closing date: 02/01/09

###### Healthcare Assistant

Salary: £12,922 to £15,950 pa  
Band: 2  
Hours: 37.5  
Location: Whitstable & Tankerton Hospital  
Ref: 767-EIC709  
Closing date: 04/01/09



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0.4 fte - ability to be flexible desirable

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Recognised Dyslexia/SpLD qualification

Applications, with full CV's, a letter of introduction and  
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The Headmaster, Dover College, Effingham Crescent,  
Dover, Kent, CT17 9RH

Closing Date for Applications 9th January 2009

Tel: 01304 205969 ext. 201

Email: [headmaster@dovercollege.org.uk](mailto:headmaster@dovercollege.org.uk) or  
[hm.pa@dovercollege.org.uk](mailto:hm.pa@dovercollege.org.uk) [www.dovercollege.org.uk](http://www.dovercollege.org.uk)

Dover College is committed to safeguarding and  
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E-Mail: [hr@swale.gov.uk](mailto:hr@swale.gov.uk)

Closing date: 29 Dec 2008 Interviews: expected to be held in Jan 2009

Colyer Road  
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Head: John Hassett MA

## GRADUATE TEACHER PROGRAMME

In collaboration with Canterbury Christ Church University College, we wish to offer the following:

### Trainee placement on the following Graduate Teacher Programmes

#### Maths – Design Technology

The successful candidate will receive training from experienced teachers at Northfleet Technology College supplemented by a number of days provided by Canterbury University.

The successful person must have at least 50% of their degree in their chosen subject. They need to be organised, self motivated and able to work independently. Salary will be £15,113.

This very popular school of 900 boys, awarded specialist status in September 2003, is situated in the 'Thames Gateway' area of Kent, with excellent links to nearby London and the Channel coast. NTC is an exciting environment to work in, which is committed to the principle of lifelong learning for students and staff. There is a well established ethos of professional development for all our employees.

We are looking for enthusiastic, hardworking individuals to join our team and if you enjoy working with young people, relish a challenge and feel you have the necessary skills for this post we would like to hear from you.

Please contact Mrs Gill Taylor, our Initial Teacher Coordinator, for an informal chat about this opportunity and for further details.

An application form can be obtained from by telephone 01474 533802, fax 01474 536122 or by email [taylorg@ntc.kent.sch.uk](mailto:taylorg@ntc.kent.sch.uk). Please enclose/attach your CV. Do check our web site: [www.ntc.kent.sch.uk](http://www.ntc.kent.sch.uk)

Closing Date is **Wednesday 31st December 2008**



## 4 x Service Managers Psychological Therapies in Primary Care

£31,551 - £40,440 PRO-RATA

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There is an opportunity to take on clinical work in addition to your management responsibilities, this could be for one or two days a week making the role either four days a week or full time.

You will need experience of delivering or managing brief psychological therapies and a relevant qualification at diploma or degree level. A strong commitment to evidence based practice is vital and experience of quality assurance systems relevant to primary care/therapy (e.g. CORE) would be an advantage. You will need to be self-motivated, innovative, able to inspire your team and possess empathy balanced with the ability to achieve goals.

For an informal discussion, please contact Sam Downie, Assistant Director at [sdowndie@kca.org.uk](mailto:sdowndie@kca.org.uk)

An application form and job description can be downloaded from <http://www.kca.org.uk/pages/vacancies.html> or email [recruitment@kca.org.uk](mailto:recruitment@kca.org.uk). Alternatively, you can write to KCA (UK), Dan House, 44 East Street, Faversham, Kent ME13 8AT or call 01795 590635. Please quote reference: 538

Closing date: 5pm, 2 January 2009.

Interview date: 14 January 2009.

KCA (UK) is committed to the principles of equality of opportunity for all. Charity No: 292824

[www.kca.org.uk](http://www.kca.org.uk)



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It will be an advantage to have a good background in copy writing, headlines and marketing skills as well as the ability to understand call-to-action and unique tagline messages. Knowledge of QuarkXPress, Photoshop, Illustrator or InDesign would also be an advantage.

All applicants should include an illustration/scamp of any advert from any local paper, illustrating how this advert could stand out or be portrayed in a way that talks more to its potential consumer than the original advert in the local paper.

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with Business Editor

TONY PATEY

## BUSINESS BRIEFS

### Online learning to cut out packaging waste

WITH cost-savings an ongoing priority for businesses during the tough economic climate, sustainable business experts Envirowise are advising companies in the South East to think 'out of the box' when it comes to identifying ways they can cut out waste in 2009.

With an estimated 80 per cent of the cost of a product and its packaging set at the design stage, the adoption of leaner, more sustainable, packaging design, without any loss in performance, can have a positive knock-on effect on costs and profitability.

To help companies understand where improvements can be made, and to help them influence supply chains, Envirowise is running a free webinar on eco-design for products and packaging on Wednesday, February 25.

To sign up or find out more, see [www.envirowise.gov.uk/webinar](http://www.envirowise.gov.uk/webinar).

### Funding to help with management training

GOOD Christmas news for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) who have between five and 249 employees: they now have the opportunity to claim up to £2,000 of funding to spend on leadership training for their senior management team.

With up to £1,000 available through the Government's Train To Gain scheme, plus another £1,000 of matched funding by training company Enterprise Leaders Worldwide, executives of qualifying SMEs can be taught entrepreneurial leadership by past and present stars of TV's Dragons' Den, Simon Woodroffe and Duncan Bannatyne. Details are available at [www.train2gain1k.co.uk](http://www.train2gain1k.co.uk).

### Demand is on the up

APPROACHING the first anniversary of the launch of its Thames Gateway office at Chatham Historic Dockyard, regional law firm Furley Page is bucking the business trend and celebrating a period of growth.

The team is led by commercial law partner Susan Jennings, who said the team had found an increasing demand for private client services – from people moving home to needing advice on wills, tax-planning and family law issues.

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SCALED DOWN: Recession fears were put aside by many businesses, with three in five firms still holding office parties, even if they were slightly smaller than previous years

# We're not too gloomy to hold office parties

GLOOM in the economy did not stop businesses staging celebrations in the run-up to Christmas this year – but some of the trimmings were carved out of the traditional office get-togethers.

A survey published by the Chartered Management Institute revealed three out of every five firms held an office party – only slightly down on the two out of three in 2007.

Bosses say the knees-ups were designed to boost staff morale despite the miserable predictions for the year ahead.

The report suggests that some employers, however, were adopting a more socially aware approach – preferring to spend their money on good causes.

But they were watching the pennies. Many employers believed extravagant parties were unnecessary. Fifty per cent, for example, sug-

gested hosting expensive parties could have a negative impact on their reputation.

For many the festivities were funded out of the staff's own pocket. A quarter of employers in the region made no financial contribution to office parties this year, although a quarter agreed to pay up to £40 per person.

Key findings included:

- Budget bashes: only a minority in Kent – 12 per cent – included employees' partners in this year's celebrations and just two per cent invited clients. Half were concerned expensive parties might send out the wrong message in the current climate.
- Social conscience: 37 per cent in the region bought only Christmas cards that support charities and 22 per cent went for eCards – demonstrating a concern for the environment. And half argued Christmas was an appropri-

ate time to engage in corporate social responsibility – going out into the community to help.

• 'Tis the season of thanks: 37 per cent of line managers bought gifts for their team members and 16 per cent gave time off at Christmas without taking out of holiday leave.

Jo Causon, director of marketing and corporate affairs at the institute, said: "It should come as no surprise that employers controlled Christmas budgets with tighter purse-strings this year."

"However, it is encouraging to see responsible budget management is going hand-in-hand with an effort to thank staff for their efforts during the year and a determination to recognise hard work."

Away from work, the survey also asked respondents to name the 'must-hear' festive music. Among the favourites this year were perennial classic Silent Night, Fairytale Of New York by The Pogues and Kirsty MacColl, and Bing Crosby's White Christmas.

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# Villa cup clash to pack out Priestfield

Picture: GOR KUPCO



FULL HOUSE: Tickets for Gillingham's FA Cup third-round clash against Aston Villa have sold out

THE last few tickets for Gillingham's FA Cup tie with Aston Villa were sold this week with Priestfield set for its first sell-out in more than five years.

Despite ticket prices being increased by 15 per cent on a normal home game, the prospect of watching England stars Gareth Barry, Ashley Young and Gabriel Agbonlahor has seen Gills fans turn out in force.

Supporters with season tickets or ticket stubs from games against Stockport and Chesterfield, queued for more than an hour at times last week to get their hands on the prized tickets for the third-round tie on January 4.

If Villa sell out their 1,500 allocation it will be the first time Priestfield

## FOOTBALL

will be completely sold out since September 2003, when 11,400 crammed in to watch Gills beat West Ham 2-0 in Division One.

Regardless of the result, Gills are set to bank at least £300,000 from the game, which will be shown live on television. The figure could rise substantially if they manage to force a replay at Villa Park, where they would take home 45 per cent of the gate.

The club have already seen a surge in interest, with ticket sales for last Saturday's game against Brentford

and the visit of Wycombe Wanderers on Sunday higher than expected.

Gills boss Mark Stimson is aware his players could be distracted ahead of games against Dagenham & Redbridge on Boxing Day and Wycombe on Sunday, but plans to use Villa as an incentive.

He said: "We have got to stay focused because everyone's human and we know what's coming. We can't get away from that but I'll be stressing to the players that won't happen if you don't perform correctly because no one's shirt is guaranteed."

Log on to [www.kentnews.co.uk](http://www.kentnews.co.uk) for live match updates from Gills' next three games and all the build-up to the big FA Cup clash.

## Kent to take on Aussies in packed fixture list

KENT will take on the visiting Australians in a two-day game at Canterbury ahead of the fifth and final Test of the 2009 Ashes series.

Next season's fixtures were announced last week, with Rob Key's side beginning the LV County Championship against Northamptonshire at Canterbury on April 21.

Beckenham will host two Twenty20 games against Middlesex Crusaders and Sussex Sharks. Essex are the opponents for the Tunbridge Wells Festival in June, while Middlesex visit for Canterbury week from August 5.

Key's side end the County Championship campaign at St Lawrence against Leicestershire. Kent will take on Ricky Ponting's Australians in a two-day game on August 15.

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 Your LOCAL TV ONLINE



See our London Golf Club course guide with expert Alasdair Robertson

## Bank Holiday bonanza at Lydden race track

LYDDEN Hill will host the European Rallycross Championship over the Bank holiday weekend of April 12-13.

It will be the first time the circuit has hosted the event since 1996 and manager Amy Doran is expecting a record crowd of 30,000 to flock to the Dover circuit.

In order to meet the FIA regulations for the event, Lydden has had to extend the track at a cost in the region of £200,000.

The newly-built circuit will be tested ahead of the European Championships on January 3 by hosting a round of the Winter Rallycross Series.

PLEASE SEND YOUR SPORTS STORIES TO SPORTS EDITOR GLENN PEARSON AT [glenn.pearson@kosmedia.co.uk](mailto:glenn.pearson@kosmedia.co.uk)



RETURN: Crowds flocked to the London Club to watch the likes of Colin Montgomerie (on the tee) and Padraig Harrington (inset) battle it out for the European Open in May

# Coup for club as it bags European Open return

THE London Golf Club has set its sights on attracting more than 100,000 spectators to the European Open next year after the tournament was again awarded to the Kent course.

The four-day Open in July was the first time the club, near Ash, had hosted an event on the European Tour. Despite being hit by bad weather on the final day, about 61,000 people attended the tournament, which featured a top class field including Sergio Garcia, Padraig Harrington and Ian Poulter.

Heath Harvey, general manager at the London Club, was delighted with the maiden tournament but is hoping for more in 2009.

"On the whole, most things exceeded our expectations," he said. "We are just hellbent on growing the attendance to in excess of 100,000."

## GOLF

■ BY DAVID PRITCHARD

There's no point in putting the tournament on unless you can make it as big as possible. Our ambition is to make this one of the biggest events in Kent next year."

The European Tour began talks about bringing the tournament back to the club this summer, but the announcement was delayed by problems finding a sponsor. A sponsor is due to be announced soon, which allowed the Tour to make its decision to return to Kent next May.

Despite the uncertainty, the club was confident of retaining the tournament and within weeks of this year's event had begun a £100,000 groundworks programme. Several new tees have been installed to make the

course tougher, while minor improvements will be made throughout the spring.

Ashford's Benn Barham, Kent's only European Tour professional, knows the club well and believes it compares well to the other courses featured in the calendar.

He said: "The venue is fantastic, both the club and the course are built for a major tournament, it's always a joy to go there."

The club also hopes to stage a repeat of this year's hugely successful 'Free Ticket Thursday' promotion. About 14,000 people signed up for up to two tickets each with the scheme, which gave 24,000 golf fans the chance to see world class players for free on the first day of the tournament.

Harvey said: "It's down to the European Tour but I would hope it comes back because it's a good initiative. It was terrific to see so many people of all ages enjoying the golf for free on the first day."

# Town win further proof of play-off credentials

## FOOTBALL

■ BY TOM HOWARD

**Walton Casuals 0**



Ly 18 Ray 44 Sherwood pen 72

ASHFORD Town's play-off charge is gathering pace after securing their fifth consecutive league win to move the Nuts and Bolts up to fourth position in the Ryman South.

Just a month ago a contingent of Ashford fans were calling for Lovell to be sacked, but an impressive November and December has seen the Nuts & Bolts vindicate their tag of being play-off favourites.

Town's form continued on Saturday as they swept aside struggling Walton Casuals to move within five points of league-leaders Kingstoneian.

Ashford, full of confidence from their run of four consecutive league wins, started the game brightly and forced a number of corners early on as Casuals struggled to cope with the high tempo of the game.

Walton goalkeeper Craig Bradshaw had to be alert as he tipped one in-swinging effort onto the crossbar.

Ashford's pressure told on 18 minutes as the unmarked Danny Lye met a Jimmy Elford cross to head into the net.

Six minutes later Ashford doubled their advantage as captain Sean Ray headed in from a corner to compound Walton's poor start to the game.

The second half followed a similar pattern and Ashford wrapped up the victory by scoring a third goal from a penalty.



SCORER: Ashford's Mitchell Sherwood (right) wrapped up a comfortable win to keep the Nuts & Bolts in the play-off positions

### Ashford starting XI



Walton's Jordan McCartney gave away the spot-kick which Mitchell Sherwood made no mistake with in firing the ball past Bradshaw.

Town goalkeeper Seb Barton, who had very little to do all afternoon, was called into action at the death to deny Anthony Gale's shot.

Ashford will host neighbours Folkestone Invicta this Saturday, which could see a large crowd flock to Homelands for former Ashford manager Neil Cugley's return with his Invicta side.

Cash-strapped Invicta could provide a strong test for Ashford, but the incentive of a sixth league win on the bounce could lift Lovell's side into third in Ryman South.

• For a full match report, log on to [www.yourashford.co.uk](http://www.yourashford.co.uk).

## Midnight run for Dobriskey

### ATHLETICS

LISA Dobriskey will begin 2009 by competing in the Emerald Nuts four-mile Midnight Run in New York.

The Ashford born athlete, who finished fourth in the 1,500m Olympic final in Beijing, will be one of the major contenders for the event which takes place on New Year's Eve in New York's Central Park.

The race will see professional athletes and fun runners race through Central Park at midnight to celebrate the New Year. More than 5,000 participants are expected to take part in the race.

Dobriskey is no stranger to racing in New York as she won the Manhattan Mile event in September, setting the second fastest time in the process.

Despite a hectic season which has seen the 24-year-old race all over the world, she is excited at the prospect of racing into 2009.

She said: "I am really looking forward to it. It is something completely different to anything that I have done before."

Next season could be a crucial year for Dobriskey as she hopes to come back from the World Athletics Championships at Berlin in August with a medal.



## Camier ready to ride out on new Yamaha

### SUPERBIKES

BRITISH Superbikes rider Leon Camier is not fazed about riding a different bike next season and is eager to start racing again.

The 22-year-old, from Ashford, had an impressive second season in the series with the GSE team, picking up three victories including his maiden British Superbike race win.

Camier's team have announced they will be using Yamaha bikes for 2009 instead of the Italian marque Ducati, as was used by Camier and former team-mate Shane Byrne in the last campaign.

Despite the change of machinery, Camier believes it won't take long to get used to the new bike.

He said: "I was a bit shocked that the team announced to change from Ducati machinery to Yamaha, but they have said they are going to put a lot of effort in. I am sure the team will do an awesome job as usual."

"I have not ridden a Yamaha before but at the end of the day it is still a bike and there shouldn't be a massive difference."

Camier finished fifth in the rider standings last season and is eager to eclipse a successful 2008 when the season begins at home circuit Brands Hatch on April 13.

He added: "We are set to do a large amount of testing so myself and the team can get



TEAM SWITCH: Leon Camier will race for Airwaves Yamaha next season

Picture AIRWAVES YAMAHA

used to the bike. Hopefully by the time the season starts we will be right up there and I cannot wait for it to begin."



MOMENTUM: Steve Lovell hopes to take Ashford Town's end of year form into the New Year

**I knew we would come good, says Nuts and Bolts boss**

### FOOTBALL

WITH just five points separating Ashford Town from the top of Ryman South, manager Steve Lovell hopes his side can maintain their impressive change of form.

Following their 3-0 win at Walton Casuals on Saturday, Town extended their unbeaten run to nine games and have moved into the division's play-off positions.

Lovell hopes his side can keep the momentum going to ensure they finish the campaign in a play-off spot.

He said: "Everyone seems to be dropping points at the top and it is getting very bunched up which bodes well for us in the second half of the season.

"I suppose we are at the point we wished to be in at the start of the season. It has taken a while for us to get going, but we have moved players in and out and we are finally getting results. If we can keep the momentum going then we will be at the sharp end."

Two months ago a group of Ashford supporters were calling for Lovell to be sacked, but it never worried the Town boss and he knew his side would come good.

He said: "I don't feel I have to prove myself to the fans. They are entitled to say what they want but I have confidence in my ability. Every club I have been at I have left them in a better position than when I took over."

"All I am focused on is my players, staff and the chairman. Football is a funny game – fans love you when you are winning and call you the worst manager in the world when you lose."

Next up for Ashford is a Kent derby with near neighbours Folkestone Invicta and Lovell is aware of the threat they possess.

He added: "There should be a good crowd for the Folkestone game, that is for sure. We have just got to keep working hard and make sure we get a result. It will be a tough game and we will have to be well prepared."

Defender Lee Hockey has left Homelands to join Chatham Town as Lovell could not guarantee him first-team football.

### VIEW THIS CLIP ON

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Chris Dickson could return to Priestfield if Gills manager Mark Stimson has his way



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